

THE
DOUBLE MISTAKE.

A
COMEDY.

As it is PERFORMED at the
THEATRE-ROYAL IN COVENT-GARDEN.

Depressa resurgam.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ALMON, opposite Burlington-House in Piccadilly; T. LOWNDES in Fleet-Street; S. BLADON in Pater-noster-Row; and J. WILLIAMS, next the Mitre Tavern in Fleet-Street.

M.DCC.LXVI.

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]

Dramatis Personæ.

DOUBLE TAKE.

M E N,

Lord Belmont,

Mr. Ross,

Sir Charles Somerville,

Mr. SMITH.

Mr. Belmont,

Mr. SHUTER,

Mr. Southerne,

Mr. DUNSTALL,

Elder Freeman,

Mr. HULL.

Younger Freeman,

Mr. DYER.

Thomas, Servant to Mr. Belmont, Mr. HOLTOM,

Ralph, Servant to Younger Freeman, Mr. CUSHING,

Two Men Servants.



W O M E N.

Lady Bridget Belmont,

Mrs. WALKER,

Lady Mary Belmont,

Miss MACKLIN.

Lady Louisa Belmont,

Miss WILFORD.

Emily Southerne,

Mrs. MATTOCKS.

A Maid Servant,

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ALMON, opposite Huntington House in Pall Mall.
SCENE, LONDON.
 Patented by J. ALMON, and J. WILLIAMS, near the Mint
 Tavern in Fleet Street.

M.DCC.LXVI.

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]

TO HER GRACE THE
Duchess of MARLBOROUGH,

THIS Comedy is most humbly inscribed,
by one whose work and wishes, inconsiderable as they are, should ever be dedicated to her noble family, and who is also sensible of the highest respect for her Grace's merit, and truly amiable character, and who has the honour to be,

Her GRACE'S

most humble, and

most obedient Servant,

The AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr. SMITH.

TO lead attention thro' five acts of prose,
Where to soft notes no tuneful couplet flows,
To please each heart, each judgment, eye and ear,
The attempt how bold ! the labour how severe !
Thus I address'd our bard ; who quick reply'd
With honest diffidence, and modest pride :
" If I should fail, I shall not think it shame
" To miss what few have gain'd, the wreath of fame.
" This spot I deem the public treasury,
" Where wits, rare coins, for general service lye ;
" Where critics, strict examiners, are plac'd
" To try each piece by that nice standard, taste ;
" And what to public use may be apply'd,
" Is justly sav'd, what faulty, thrown aside.
" Hence, 'tis the Poet's duty to dispense
" Each various vein of humour, wit, or sense ;
" Not miser-like, to his own board confine
" The smallest spark of nature's genuine mine ;
" But to the muse his grateful tribute pay,
" And in the common mint his quota lay."
On this resolve, he to your sterling store
Presents a specimen of untry'd ore ;
If any worth it bears, assay'd by you,
His private talent is the public due ;
And should it not disgrace your brilliant mass,
Give it your stamp, and let the metal pass.

THE
DOUBLE MISTAKE.

A
C O M E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An apartment in Lord Belmont's house.

Enter Lord Belmont, reading a letter, a servant following.

Lord BELMONT.

MY compliments to the lady, and I will instantly attend her. Order James to bring the chariot to the door directly. *[Exit Servant.]*

The more I think of this extraordinary summons, the more I am surpris'd at it. Emily Southern, my near relation, at an inn in London, and desires to see me!—I tremble for the cause; for though by no means infected with Spanish jealousy, I look upon it that the honour of every woman in my family, lessens or increases mine.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Good-morrow, nephew, I am glad to see you up so early; I wonder how the folks, that lye a-bed, ever get through the business of the day; for my part, though I rise ever so soon, I am in a perfect hurry, from morning to night.

L. Bel. I shou'd imagine, sir, that a little regularity might prevent your being so much embarrass'd. —Method makes all things easy.

B

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Enter a Servant.

Ser. Your lordship's chariot is ready. [*Exit.*]

Bel. That's lucky.—Will you be so kind, my lord, as to take me along with you, as far as the Tower? There is a wharfinger there, who, I am told, is possess'd of an inestimable treasure: a Roman ring made of iron, which, for ought we know, might have belong'd to the mighty Julius himself.

Enter Thomas.

Tbo. Sir, [*to Mr. Belmont*] the gentleman is below, whom you desired to wait on you about the tulip roots: he says there is a cargo just arriv'd from Holland, and if you don't make haste, the choice ones will be gone immediately.

Bel. Was ever man so unfortunate! Well, my lord, you see I can't wait on you, at present; but I beg you will not go to the wharfinger's alone, nor buy the ring till I see it.

L. Bel. You may depend upon me, sir: I shall not even go within a mile of the place; my engagements lye another way. [*Exit.*]

Bel. That's well, that's well; get me my cloak: no, get me a chair, I'll go directly to the man that has the macaw birds, and the cocatoo's, and buy me some of them immediately.

Tbo. The gentleman waits about the tulips, sir.

Bel. Odso, odso, I forgot; was ever any poor man so hurry'd as I am!

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Sir, there is a man below, that says you desired him to call with some fine shells.

Bel. What shall I do? Well, I will see the man with the shells. [*going, returns*] There again, I am undone, my spectacles are at Margafs's. You must step to my sister, Lady Bridget, and desire her to lend me hers

[*To Thomas.*]

Tbo.

Tho. I don't believe, fir, her ladyship uses spectacles; at least I should be afraid to offend her, by asking.

Bel. Not use spectacles, and near threescore! ha, ha, ha, very fine, indeed: but come, Thomas, get my cloak; I'll take a turn in the Park, and then to the Cocoa-tree, to hear the news of the day, and peruse the advertisements.—I have a world of business on my hands, that's certain. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II. *A chamber in an inn.*

Enter Emily.

Emi. There lives not, surely, on this globe, a wretch so lost, so totally forlorn, as I am. In one sad moment depriv'd of friends and fame. But what are these to the sharp pangs that rend my tortur'd heart, for his unkindness, who should heal my grief, assert my innocence, and clear my fame? But he, alas! thinks meanly of me, and in that thought the measure of my sorrow is accomplish'd.—I am a wretch, indeed!

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Madam, the gentleman you sent to is below, and desires to see you.

Emi. Shew him in—*[Exit Servant.]* How shall I tell my story, how make my innocence appear?

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. That I am glad to see you any where, my dear Emily, this visit will evince; but, I confess, I am surpriz'd at meeting you in such a place as this, when I, who have the honour of being so nearly related to you, am master of a house in London. I think your billet said you were alone. I now expect you will explain this mystery, by other means than tears and blushes.—Pray speak, and clear my doubts.

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Emi. Innocence shou'd be bold, my lord; but maiden innocence is full of fear. Pray pardon my hesitation; I know not how, or where I shall begin.

L. Bel. Recollect your spirits, and be assur'd you speak to one, who, to the utmost of his power, will prove a brother to you.—My sisters too, I'll answer for them, when once acquainted with your person and merit, will be your sisters also.

Emi. Your kindness has encouraged me. Your lordship knows my mother died while I was yet an infant, and that my father married soon again.—From that unhappy hour, I became an alien to his heart and person; under pretence of education, I was sent to school, where I received the honour of your lordship's frequent and friendly visits, and remain'd there 'till about two years since.—Wou'd I had never left it!

L. Bel. Pray proceed.

Emi. The taunts, the cruelties I met at home, are not to be describ'd. 'Till about six weeks since, there was a match propos'd to me, with the most detestable of men, which I, prostrate at my father's feet, and bathing them with tears, refused.

L. Bel. He cou'd not sure attempt to force your hand?

Emi. Every argument was used to persuade, every threat to terrify me, into compliance, but in vain. During this time of persecution, my father's ill health obliged him to visit Bath; I was permitted to attend him, upon promising to try to conquer my aversion to this hated marriage.—I promised any thing, to gain a respite.

L. Bel. As you describe your situation, I cannot blame you.—But was it aversion to the match propos'd, or prepossession for some other object, that ruled your will? I beg you will be sincere. Your blushes answer me.—But go on.

Emi. I do not mean, my lord, to hide a single thought; sincerity is the fair garb of virtue, and they who know no guilt, need no disguise. At Bath, I met

met a gentleman, whom I had known at school, his sister was my friend and favourite there, and, in my childish days, he used to call himself my lover.— Even then I thought him, as sure he is this moment, the most amiable of his sex.

L. Bel. Poor Emily, I begin to tremble for you.

Emi. This gentleman renew'd his former courtship, if I may be allow'd the term, while my first impressions recurr'd with added strength. He asked me of my father, who absolutely refus'd, and forbid me ever to see him more—cruel, inhuman sentence!

L. Bel. This was indeed severe.

Emi. I received a billet from him, requesting me to see him when the family were retired to rest. My father had ordered every thing to be got ready for leaving Bath next day.

L. Bel. And you, of course, consented to this last adieu?

Emi. He came, and while he uttered the tenderest vows of everlasting love, we heard a noise in my closet, to which he flew, and, on forcing it open, to our mutual astonishment, a gentleman rushed out. My dear, deceived, unhappy lover, called on him to draw; and, casting a look of rage, mix'd with contempt, at me, said, "Life is no longer worth my care, thy perfidy has made it hateful to me." I threw myself between their swords, and scream'd so loud, that it brought my father, and all the family, into the room. At sight of him, my terror and confusion redoubled. I ran down stairs into the street, without knowing whither I went, or what to do. The night coach was setting off for London, at that moment; I got into it, without determining on any thing, but that I wou'd not return; and hither it has brought me.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Sir Charles Somerville has this moment alighted at the door, and seeing your lordship's

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chariot there, begs leave to pay his respects to you. [Exit.]

Emi. Quick, let me fly, my lord. [Runs to the door.]

L. Bel. You'll meet him that way. Into this closet; I will not suffer him to keep you long a prisoner. [She goes into the closet.]

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

L. Bel. Welcome to London, my dear Charles; but to what happy chance are we indebted for your return? I understood that you meant to pass a philosophical summer, at your seat in the west, in reading and retirement. But it grew dull, I suppose; it wou'd not do, Sir Charles; tho' you have not made a very long trial of it, I think, neither.

Sir Cha. I have not indeed, my lord, made the smallest attempt towards the rational scheme you hint at. Thoughts of a very different nature have, for some time past, wholly occupied my mind, and left no room for any thing beside, but friendship, and Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Lord Belmont is much yours. But from this sententious speech, and that grave countenance, I think I may, without being a conjuror, pronounce, that the gay and lively Sir Charles Somerville is on the point of matrimony with some well-jointur'd widow, or rich heiress; and that he is, at this very moment, making an exact calculation of the fortune he shall allot to his seventh son, by, and of that marriage lawfully begotten.

Sir Cha. Your lordship was never more mistaken. — So far from it, that I have bid adieu to the whole sex, and am determin'd to quit England, in a few days, with a firm purpose never to revisit it. [A loud sigh heard from the closet.] Ha! whence cou'd that sigh proceed?

L. Bel. Sir Charles, I beg a thousand pardons, but I must entreat you to withdraw immediately, and request the pleasure of meeting you at my house, in half an hour.

Sir

Sir Char. I shall obey your commands, but can scarce forgive your suffering my present intrusion.

[*Exit.*]

Lord Belmont opens the closet.

L. Bel. Emily! She faints!

Emi. Be not alarmed, my lord, the closeness of the place overcame my spirits; I shall recover soon: but is Sir Charles resolv'd then? does he leave England immediately? what have I said! I mean, my lord, is the gentleman quite gone? is there no fear of his returning? one is apt to rave after fainting, you know, my lord.

L. Bel. There is method in your madness, Emily; but tho' I dare say you did not mean to trust me with the name of your lover, be assured I am extremely pleas'd at discovering him in the person of my friend Sir Charles Somerville.

Emi. He is, indeed, my lord, the object of my hopes, and my despair; but to what purpose do I own my passion? he quits his native land, to fly from me!

L. Bel. Be patient, Emily—from his known character of truth, and honour, I am certain he will do you justice; dare you abide that test?

Emi. Most willingly, my lord.

L. Bel. The way to hope for candour from Somerville, the world, and me, is by a frank confession. Who was that gentleman he found concealed?

Emi. By all my hopes of candour from the world, of esteem from you, and love from Somerville, I know him not; nor why, or wherefore he came thither.

L. Bel. I must believe you, Emily; there is a charm in truth, that strikes upon the mind, like light upon our eyes.—'Tis irresistible. Yet passion, I will grant, may cast a veil on either; I therefore can excuse Sir Charles for judging wrong.

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Emi. Oh! blame him not, my lord, appearances were strong against me; but while we talk, he flies.

L. Bel. Your fears are those of love, but let them rest; and be assur'd he shall not break the double toil, that love and friendship spread to hold him fast. But come, my Emily, I am impatient 'till I place you in a fitter situation, and present you to my sisters.

Emi. By no means, my lord; think how improper it would be for me to appear in your house, or any where in my own character, 'till time shall have unravell'd this cruel mystery. Scandal has as many wings as tongues, and in a few hours, I may expect to be the general subject of discourse, and object of reproach. Besides, you may suppose my father will pursue me, and, if under your roof, I must be discover'd.

L. Bel. Your objections are just, and yet you can be no where so safe, as under my protection. Suppose then you were to be introduc'd to my aunt and sisters, who have never seen you, under a feign'd name and character, as the daughter of a clergyman, a particular friend of mine; they have often heard me speak of such a person, who has been some years dead, his name was Lawton.

Emi. I put myself under your lordships guidance, and shall assume whatever form you please, 'till heaven thinks fit to let me wear my own with honour.

L. Bel. I hope you will not continue long in masquerade; but now, my dear, your hand. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *A dressing-room in Lord Belmont's house, Lady Mary at work, and Lady Louisa with a book in her hand.*

L. Mar. My dear sister, let me dissuade you from carrying on this affair with Mr. Freeman any farther; if he really loves you, and his family and fortune may pretend to such a match, why not consult my brother? who has an undoubted right to be considered as a father, from having acted on all occasions like one.

L. Loui. You have very vulgar notions, sister; I suppose if you shou'd ever have a lover, you will bid him ask your parents whether you shall like him or not? —poor soul! but is it aunt Bridget, or uncle Frank, he shall apply to? ha, ha! Do you know, my dear, that as well as I love my Strephon, if he were to say one syllable about me to my grave brother, it is an hundred to one, I shou'd detest him. Secrecy is the very essence of love, and like all other essences, it will evaporate, the moment it gets air.

L. Mar. I am sorry to differ so much in opinion with you, Louisa, but I can't help thinking that the most innocent correspondence, which can possibly subsist between men and women, becomes in some degree criminal, when it is carried on clandestinely; at least, it must appear as if one party was ashamed of the other, which you must allow to be a sentiment, by no means consistent with heroic love.

L. Loui. Read, read, my dear, and improve yourself, for you are really very ignorant; did you ever hear of a heroine, in tragedy, or romance, who consulted any third person, in the disposal of her heart?

L. Mar. I can't say I have read many of either; but to such over-weening confidence in ourselves, I believe we are indebted for many tragical subjects.

L. Loui. A truce! a truce! dear girl; and for this once, assist me. It is impossible I can refuse to see him this evening; when he so ardently intreats it; in your grave mathematical calculation, he has been absent three weeks, but that, you know, is three thousand years, in a lover's calendar.

L. Mar. My dear Louisa, I will, tho' against my judgment, to the utmost of my power, assist you; but if my lord should pass the evening at home, I cannot guess how it is possible, without alarming him; or, what is much worse, making confidants of the servants, to effect your purpose.

L. Loui. Give me your aid, and leave the rest to me.

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Enter Lady Bridget.

L. Brid. Your servant, ladies—what, at work? you are a most indefatigable creature, niece Mary, and sometimes remind me of those industrious maidens, that work'd beds and hangings, as I have heard my grandmother say; for those mechanical amusements were entirely out of fashion, before my youth was capable of instruction.

L. Mar. Your ladyship has given up your time to more abstruse and difficult employments, the study of the learned languages; but as every person may not have capacity, or inclination, to employ their minds in that way, I look upon works of fancy as pleasing and innocent amusements.

L. Brid. They are perfectly simple, indeed, and, of course, may be innocent.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Good morrow, ladies; have you enliven'd the Park with your presence this morning, Louisa? or staid at home on the rational plan of reading and working, by turns, with Lady Mary?—I hope I see you in good health, madam? [*To Lady Bridget.*]

L. Brid. Tolerable, not exuberant, I thank your lordship.

L. Loui. We have been quite on the domestic plan, my lord, and, of course, extremely dull.

L. Mar. We have felt the loss of your lordship's company, who are generally so good to make yourself the master of our revels.

L. Brid. That's a bad phrase, niece; revels imply revelling, which is a term indecent for so young a lady to make use of. I declare, I was turned of twenty, before I cou'd be prevail'd on to pronounce the word jollity; and then it was at the earnest intreaty of poor dear Mr. Feeble, that I wou'd give it utterance. It was a dying request, for he expired of a galloping consumption, in a few hours after I had granted his desire.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. As I cou'd with to justify Lady Mary's expression, I will for this once take upon me the character her politeness has assign'd me, by making a present to ye all, that will, I hope, both improve, and enlarge the circle of your pleasures.

L. Loui. [*aside*] What can it be, sister? I die to know.

L. Brid. Some improvement, I suppose, nephew, in the Encyclopædia; there are many sciences yet left imperfect.

L. Bel. No, madam, it is a living volume I mean to offer to your inspection, and I think a fair one. 'Tis the daughter of my old friend, Mr. Lawson, who is come to town upon business, and I have intreated her to make this house her own.

L. Mar. We shall doubtless do every thing, in our power, to render it agreeable to her.

L. Bel. I will present her to you instantly. [*Exit.*]

L. Brid. Her father was a very learned divine, and who can tell but she may understand the rabbinical text? O! if she can but translate the Lexicon, I shall be quite happy.

Enter Lord Belmont, presenting Emily.

L. Bel. I hope, madam, you will now consider yourself as in a brother's house, and as another sister to these two ladies.

Emi. If they will condescend to accept my friendship and esteem, they shall be truly theirs.

L. Mar. We thankfully receive, and shall endeavour to deserve them both, by sending ours to meet them more than half way.—Fye, sister, why are you so cold? Pray speak. [*Aside to Louisa.*]

L. Loui. [*to L. Mary.*] She is vastly handsome—Every person who has the pleasure of seeing you, madam, must necessarily feel such a prepossession in your favour, as willingly to accept what you so kindly offer.

L. Brid.

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L. Brid. Very courtly and correctly spoken on all sides, my lord; but ladies, the hour appropriated to the adornment of our persons draws near, and I shall request the favour of this young lady to accompany me to the temple of the graces, or, in other words, the toilet. [*Aside.*] I think that was elegantly express'd, and must inspire her with a proper idea of my erudition.

Emi. I shall esteem it an honour to attend your ladyship. [*Lord Belmont bows, as taking leave.*]

L. Brid. Is your lordship also on the wing? Come then, you shall conduct us. [*Exeunt Lord Belmont, Lady Bridget, and Emily.*]

L. Loui. There are some very odd whims come into my head about this girl, sister; she is quite a beauty, nay, seems accomplish'd too; a clergyman's daughter! that's the old story. But in short, Maria, I begin to think this wise brother of ours has his failings, like other men, and growing indolent, as they all do, chuses to bring his favourites near home: did you observe with what an enquiring eye he looked at you? He thought he might easily impose on poor aunt Bridget and me, but he is mistaken. Was this his fine present?

L. Mar. For shame, Louisa, how can you think so badly of a man who has deserv'd so well? Left to his care, even from our earliest years, what tenderness, what delicacy has he not shewn, both to our sex and age?

L. Loui. I grant the utmost; but still there is a somewhat that strikes upon my mind, and tells me there is mystery in this affair; and I am determin'd to find it out, if I can.

L. Mar. Indeed, sister, there is something very ungenerous in suspicion; if the tenor of our lives cannot exempt us from censure, with respect to this world, we act virtuously in vain.

L. Loui. O! for heaven's sake, my dear, let us have done with this wise discourse; it actually gives me

me the vapours, and I wou'd tune my spirits to their highest key, for Freeman will be here to-night.
 "Winds, catch the sound."

L. Mar. Positively, sister, if you abridge my morality, I must insist on an abatement of your transports.

L. Loui. Well then,

"Form'd by thy converse, happily I'll steer,

"From grave to gay, from lively to severe."
 Is not that quite civil now?

L. Mar. Vastly polite, indeed.

L. Loui. But till this most important business remains unsettled—Let me consider—Have you a pocket-almanack?

L. Mar. Not about me; but prithee why do you ask?

L. Loui. No matter, he shall come thro' the garden by moon-light.

L. Mar. What, whether the moon shines, or no?

L. Mar. I know it will; Cynthia's the lover's friend, and lends her silver lamp to light them on their way.

L. Mar. Again in heroics, Louisa?

L. Loui. I have done—His letter says, his servant will be here in an hour, from my fair hand to receive his master's doom—Is not that galant, sister?

L. Mar. Yes; but I dare say he does not apprehend your ladyship's sentence shou'd ordain the dagger, or the bowl.

L. Loui. No truly, I shall be a merciful judge; his doom will not be death.

L. Mar. You seem, at present, a very compleat emblem of justice; for in my humble opinion, you are acting blindfold, tho' you might see if you pleas'd.

L. Loui. Ne'er let that bandage from my eyes remove, Which hides the faults of him I fondly love. [*Exeunt.*]

END of the FIRST ACT.

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ACT II. SCENE I.

A drawing-room in Lord Belmont's house.

Enter Lord Belmont and Sir Charles Somerville.

Sir Char. I Have now, my lord, frankly related to you all the circumstances of this extraordinary novel, except the lady's name, which I hope, for her sake, will ever remain a secret. What the denouement will be on her part, I cannot guess, but am determin'd it shall not conclude in the usual stile with me; for, from this hour, I disclaim all future thoughts of a serious connection with any of the sex.

L. Bel. Is it possible, Sir Charles, that passion can so far triumph over reason, as in one moment to destroy the good opinion of a character, form'd on a long acquaintance? You say you knew the lady from her childhood?

Sir Char. My dear Belmont, you have stated this argument quite wrong, it was not passion that triumph'd over reason, but reason that subdued passion. I can now see, nay feel, what an abject wretch he must be, who trusts his happiness in a woman's power—damn'd, smiling mischiefs, all!—I will, henceforth, see, and admire the pretty baubles, as I wou'd a fine piece of china, but no more attribute worth and honour to them, than malleability to that; for if my Emily cou'd deceive, there is no truth in woman.

L. Bel. This is mere common-place, Sir Charles.

Sir Char. By calling it common, my lord, you allow it the general sense of mankind, which is, no doubt, founded on experience. I am therefore determined to profit by it, so far as to retain my freedom at least. I think I almost feel the shackles I might have worn, but for the old gentleman's refusal.—Oh! how I thank him!

L. Bel. Perhaps you misplace your gratitude. I am not yet sure that you are under any manner of obligation to him.

Sir Char. Certainly the greatest, tho' his refusal then was daggers to my heart.—Fool that I was, I thought her what she seem'd, an angel; and, but for him, Ixion like, I had embrac'd a cloud. But why do I still talk, or think of her! she is not worth a thought, and I hope to get quite clear of her idea, before I reach Harwich.

L. Bel. Believe me, you deceive yourself; her form will haunt you, fly where'er you will, and for the same reason that murderers fancy ghosts—for I am persuaded you have injur'd her.

Sir Char. What shall I not believe my eyes! by heaven, the consciousness of her guilt even conquer'd female fear; she threw herself upon a madman's sword, such I then was; but 'twas to save her lover, and my rival; ungrateful woman!

L. Bel. You seem inclin'd to lay hold of the dark side of every circumstance; but there is one you seem not yet to have attended to, or you cou'd not think of leaving England immediately. May not the gentleman, you encounter'd in your mistress's chamber, possibly suppose you fled from him?

Sir Cha. That thought had quite escap'd me. I left a servant behind, whom I expect this night, in order to discover who my rival was; and also to find out what her father had done, or meant to do, with his unworthy, yet too lovely daughter: I fear he will use her cruelly, my lord.

L. Bel. And can you think of that, and talk of quitting England?

Sir Char. Why, faith, my lord, I have always look'd upon chivalry as a very ridiculous science, and yet I begin to think it has its foundation in nature, for I never yet heard of a damsel in distress, that I did not wish to relieve her.

L. Bel.

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L. Bel. Sir Charles, this affair is much too serious to jest with. You have asked my opinion, and, as a man of honour, and your friend, I now declare, I think your travelling scheme shou'd be entirely laid aside, until this mystery is properly explain'd. Notwithstanding your affected gaiety, I am certain you still love this lady.

Sir Char. There again, your lordship is guilty of a small error, only mistaking the past for the present tense; say I did love her, if you please.

L. Bel. Well, Sir Charles, grant you no longer love, you are certainly a man of honour, and must therefore think it incumbent on you to clear a lady's character, which may possibly have suffered as much on your account, in the minds of others, as she has done in yours, from this unlucky accident.

Sir Char. Wou'd to heaven that I cou'd clear her to my own heart, from all suspicion, with as much justice, as I can to the world, of what relates to me; in her whole conduct and behaviour towards me, she was purity herself, her soul seem'd even lovelier than her form, and cast a kind of glory round her beauty, which, while it awed, transported, raised, and chastis'd desire—yet she is false!

L. Bel. I cannot think so.

Sir Char. Be that as it may, your lordship has convinc'd me that I shou'd not leave London for a few days; within that term, or never, a clue will certainly be found, to lead us thro' this maze; I therefore will abide the event; certain it can't be worse than what I fear.

L. Bel. I must insist on your acquainting me with every step you take. You know you may command me on the most difficult occasions.

Sir Char. I certainly rely on your lordship's friendship.

L. Bel. The moment your servant arrives, pray let me know; I cannot tell you how much I am interested in this affair.—I shall be at home all day.

Sir

Sir Char. I shall call upon your lordship in the evening.

E. Bel. 'Till then adieu. [Exit severally.]

SCENE II. *A dressing-room in Lord Belmont's house, Lady Bridget at her toilet, Emily sitting, and a maid-servant attending.*

L. Brid. In what part of Albion was your father benefic'd, Miss Lawson? Had he livings in commendam, or did he only serve a simple cure?—You are abominably awkward.

Emi. [aside] What shall I say? [To the maid.]

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. O Lady Bridget, sister, wou'd you believe it, I am cheated, impos'd upon, to the last degree. The man that sold me the blue-bird, with the scarlet head, has deceived me; it is only painted. He call'd it the true blue-bird of paradise, but he is the true serpent of it, and has bit me. Odso! I beg pardon, who is that pretty lady?

L. Brid. Upon my word, brother, you seem to be verging towards the state of second childhood. You act directly like a baby, one moment purchasing toys, and the next weary of them. But as the great Mr. Dryden observes, "Men are but children of a larger growth." I hope you are an admirer of Mr. Dryden, Miss Lawson?

Emi. All persons of sense and taste, madam, I believe, admire his writings; and tho' I by no means pretend to either of those characters, I join my humble suffrage.

Bel. Odso! she talks very handsomely, Lady Bridget; I have a great notion she is very learned. Pray, madam, do you understand coins?

Emi. Not in the least, sir.

Bel. I am sorry for it, because if you did, I wou'd have treated you with a sight of my best Orho; it has the true green mold on it, and is so very antique, that

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that all traces of the figure are worn out, so that it looks for all the world like a bit of plain copper.

L. Brid. And so, to be sure, it is. Pray, brother, don't expose yourself, and interrupt our conversation.

Bel. Why, there it is now; you don't like to hear any one talk but yourself, Lady Bridget; but I won't hold my tongue, for all that. I'll go this moment, and fetch my Otho, and the lady shall be judge whether it is not a fine one; and if she says it is, I'll make her a present of it, to vex you.

Emi. I must beg to be excus'd, sir; I can by no means think of depriving you of a treasure, that wou'd be totally useless to me.

Bel. [*aside*] I am afraid she is but silly.—Useless, madam! an Otho useless! I must beg pardon.

Emi. I only said it wou'd be so to me, sir, who am not a virtuoso, and want taste to know its value.

L. Brid. This absurd conversation is an outrage on my patience, which I can no longer submit to. Pray, brother, give me leave;—I should be glad to know, Miss Lawson, if your father bequeath'd you any ancient manuscripts, in the Hebrew, or Greek languages?

Bel. O sister! dear Lady Bridget! let me enquire about them. Are they much worm-eaten? O! if I had them to present to the Society of Antiquarians, I shou'd be enroll'd among the literati, and be reckon'd a great man! Dear Miss, pray let me have them, I'll make you a present of all my birds, flowers, and shells, since you don't like antiques.

Emi. I wish it was in my power to oblige either your ladyship, or Mr. Belmont, but I really am not in possession of manuscripts in any of the learned languages.

L. Brid. But you understand them, miss?

Emi. Madam!

L. Brid. Come, come, you are too modest, I am perfectly inform'd of your great erudition.

Emi. Upon my word, madam, I cannot say I am mistress of any language, being but a very poor proficient

ficient in French and Italian, which are the only ones that I was ever taught.

L. Brid. [aside] I am vastly disgusted at her ignorance.—How cou'd your parents so shamefully neglect your education! But I presume your mother gave up her time to the making of conserves, and distilling of simples. Not understand Greek! 'tis an exalted language, and all its ideas are refin'd.

Bel. Now hang me, if I believe she understands it herself. But she is like the man in the play, "that lov'd and honour'd the sound." But, miss, if you will give me the manuscripts, I won't tell Lady Bridget, upon honour.

Emi. I do assure you, sir—

Bel. You will for ever oblige me, miss.—Egad, she has the true Cleopatran neck, and the right Grecian Venus' nose. *[Aside.]*

Enter a Servant.

Ser. [To Emily.] Madam, my lord desires to speak with you in his library, and, sir, there is a gentleman to wait on you with some modern antiques.

Bel. Models of antiques, he must have said, you blockhead!

Emi. I shall attend his lordship.

L. Brid. [aside] In his library! Poor illiterate! *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III. A library.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. I know not how to act in this affair; if her father shou'd discover her being here, I have no right to detain her. This unknown lover too puzzles me much. Somerville is positive he came to her, and yet with what an air of truth and confidence she has disown'd him! I'll make her think that Somerville is gone; she may, from that belief, become more candid.

Enter Emily.

Emi. I have expected your lordship's summons with the utmost impatience.—Have you seen Sir Charles?

L. Bel. Yes, Emily, but all my arguments were vain; he holds his purpose, and is this very moment on his journey.

Emi. And does this wretched body still subsist, after the soul is fled!

L. Bel. This is the language of romance; you must forget him. I have matters of more consequence to acquaint you with.

Emi. Why did you not suffer me to see Sir Charles? He must, he wou'd have credited the truth, and thought me what I am, injur'd, and innocent. But, at this instant, he detests my name, he thinks me false, and strives to banish me from his remembrance.

L. Bel. Then do the same by him; retaliation is held just.

Emi. Never, my lord; he is deceiv'd, and my poor heart now bleeds for what his generous soul must feel, when he shall be convinced that he has wrong'd me.

L. Bel. That may possibly never happen; or, if it shou'd, the time must be far off, and we have not a moment now to lose. I have received a letter from your father, which informs me he will be here this night, and that he comes in search of you.

Emi. My father here! and will you give me up?

L. Bel. You know I have no power to withhold you from him.

Emi. I am satisfied—all that can now befall me, is quite equal; since Somerville is lost, no matter what becomes of me.

L. Bel. I shall be very unwilling to give you back into your father's power, as I fear he will compel you to that marriage you seem so much to loath.

Emi.

Emi. No, fir, that cannot be: even at the altar, thou'd he drag me there, I will assert the rights of human kind;—not all the world combin'd, shall ever make me the wife of any other man but Somerville.

L. Bel. You never can be his; therefore, Emily, let me now advise you, if the gentleman, who was found in your closet, and has for ever separated Somerville and you, be a man of honour, and one whose family and fortune may pretend to you, to turn your thoughts on him. I really know no other way to escape your father's wrath, and rescue your own character.

Emi. Is cruelty so catching? Has Somerville infected your humanity, and taught you to insult my wretchedness! Must I again repeat, I do not know him?

L. Bel. [*aside*] Her emotion affects me, 'tis strong and natural; she has again convinc'd me.—Execute this little trial of your truth, which friendship, and not cruelty, suggested.

Emi. A wounded heart, my lord, ill brooks suspicion.

L. Bel. Pray pardon mine, and be assur'd 'tis vanish'd now. Your father's arrival may throw some new light on this affair; the moment it is clear, I will send after Sir Charles, and possibly may bring him back. Endeavour to be chearful, and hope the best.

Emi. My hopes and chearfulness have fled with him.

L. Bel. They may return, even sooner than you think. But let us join my sisters; their conversation will, at least, amuse you. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *Younger Freeman's lodgings.*

Enter Younger Freeman.

Y. Free. I am confoundedly fatigu'd; I begin to think, that a man of galantry has but a bad time of

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it; 'tis the life of a seaman, weathering storms and tempests, to gain a port, which one quits without reluctance, in three days. Well, now for the delights of matrimony! Egad, that's worse; for there, we are weather-bound for life.—Aye, but a fine young woman of quality, with ten thousand pounds.—Youth, beauty, and money, are but sweeteners, they will melt; however, I am resolv'd to try how long they, and my love, will last; for any thing is better than returning to post the books, with old square toes, that's certain.

Enter Elder Freeman.

E. Free. I am agreeably disappointed at finding you in town, brother, as I did not expect you for some time; but it is lucky you are come, for my father's patience is almost worn out by your long absence.

J. Free. And so, Jack, you think, because I am in London, that I shall quietly return into the city, and occupy my old seat in the counting-house? but faith you are mistaken; business to attorneys and mechanics, for me; I fly at higher game; pleasure, my dear, pleasure is the business of my life, and the only business worth following, believe me.

E. Free. These flights wou'd be ridiculous, even in a man of fortune, brother, but from you, they appear contemptible. You were bred to business, Harry, and a man who acts properly, in the station of life he was born to, is a much more estimable character, than a coxcomb, assuming the airs of a man of quality, without breeding, or fortune to support them. You really make a very absurd figure.

J. Free. I shou'd upon 'Change, perhaps, as the mercantile world don't deal in my way. But come, Jack, shou'd I not, even there, be look'd upon as a genius, who, in less than six months, have acquir'd ten thousand pounds, having set out in trade without one shilling of capital?

E. Free.

E. Free. As I cannot believe that you have either parts, or application, sufficient to discover the longitude, I shall not reason on such a ridiculous proposition.

Y. Free. Why truly, brother, as you observe, I have never studied mathematics, or the art of navigation, much, since I left school; nor am I philosopher enough, to have discover'd the transmutation of metals; and yet this poor contemptible, absurd brother of yours, may be master of the aforesaid sum, with some other pretty moveables thereunto belonging, in a few hours, if he thinks them worth his acceptance [*aside*.]—He must be devilish dull, if he does not guess now.

E. Free. I shou'd be extremely sorry that so near a relation of mine had enroll'd the name of Freeman among the knights of the post.

Y. Free. Have a care, Jack, though you are my brother, my honour, sir—

E. Free. Don't debase the term. — Honour's the offspring of fair truth and honesty; yet scoundrels, sharpers, worse than robbers, use it. Gambler is a name more infamous than highwayman, has all his vice, but wants his single virtue, courage. With such, I may presume, you are associated.

Y. Free. The violence of your temper, Mr. Freeman, has warped your understanding; there are other means, besides play, to make a fortune, which, since your plodding wisdom can't discover, I shall inform you of.—Suppose a lady of quality were to think my figure not quite so contemptible as you seem to do?

E. Free. Insufferable vanity!

Y. Free. You may think so, if you please; but it is a certain fact, that there is a lady, of high birth and beauty, with the fortune I have named, that is ready to take hands, and begin a dance for life, with your humble servant, Harry Freeman.

E. Free. Then you have deceiv'd, impos'd on her, which is the lowest baseness.

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Y. Free. Not I, as I hope to be sayed; I had no occasion to tell her I was a pretty fellow, "for she had eyes, and chose me." And I never pretended to be any thing more; rot me, if I did.

E. Free. Am I from hence to suppose, that you have acquainted the lady with your family, and no fortune?

Y. Free. Pardonnez moi; there was not the least necessity of informing her, that my father Anthony, and my brother John Freeman and co. formerly sold rum and hops in Bishopsgate-street, and were at present promoted to the more profitable, and, of course, more honourable employment, of keeping a bank in Lombard-street. Ha, ha, ha!

E. Free. Despicable coxcomb! I know not which you are the most proper object of, contempt or rage; can you be such a wretch, to think of abusing the love and confidence of a woman of virtue and honour, who perhaps has no other weakness, but her attachment to such a worthless being; one who would cheat her into beggary, and ruin her merely to save himself. By heaven, if I can discover who she is, I will detect your fraud.

Y. Free. Why faith, Jack, tho' you have put the affair in a bad light, you have come pretty near the truth, I own; tho', upon my soul, I love the lady.

E. Free. Answer me one question.—Wou'd you marry her, were you in affluence, and she a beggar?

Y. Free. Hum! that is stating the case quite au travers. Why I, I, I really can't tell. But I am so confoundedly dipt, Jack, I can't pay at sight, as I us'd to do, at the Bank; and then I am so hellishly afraid lest my taylor, my milliner, and friseur, should carry in their bills to my father, that, faith, I can't help it; I must marry to quit scores.

E. Free. The difficulty of your situation shall not be an excuse for such villainy—if you act with honesty, I'll serve you; inform the lady who you really

are; if she persists in her regard, I will acquaint my father, and have no doubt but he will make a suitable settlement—her fortune is by no means beyond his power to give an equivalent to.

Y. Free. Ay, Jack, but if she shou'd fly off?

E. Free. Then, sir, I'll pay your debts, provided you return to business, and renounce the coxcomb. In three days I shall expect your final answer, and from that date shall esteem you as a brother, or disclaim that tie. In the mean time, here is a bill to serve your present use.—No thanks, deserve my friendship, and be sure of it. [Exit.]

Y. Free. Why, what a devilish deal of stuff has this formal elder brother of mine canted out, about honour and honesty! Egad, I might as well have read a sermon, as I us'd to do, on a Sunday evening, when I was apprentice. “Inform the lady who I am, give her up, and return to business.”—Ha, ha, ha! poor Jack! you know little of the world on this side Temple-Bar. Tho' I felt myself somewhat awkward, at some part of his discourse, I thought he look'd like my father in a passion, and I actually began to be almost afraid of him.—I am glad he is gone, I have now three days of grace, which I am resolved to make the most of, and the worst that can happen, is, to close my books at the end of them.

Enter Ralph; and gives a letter.

Ralph. From Lady Louisa, sir.

Y. Free. [Reads and kisses it.] Corn, wine, and oyl, Ceres, Flora, Bacchus, and all the gods and goddesses! fly, Ralph, get my things to dress: dear creature! at the garden door, at seven o'clock.

Ralph. Please your honour, the trunks are not yet arriv'd.

Y. Free. No matter, I'll visit my charmer en dish-bille, en cavalier: love is above all forms, let that plead my excuse. [Exit.]

SCENE

SCENE V. *A drawing-room.*

Lord Belmont, Lady Bridget, Lady Mary, Lady Louisa, Mr. Belmont, and Emily are discover'd.

L. Bel. So then, Lady Mary, it is your opinion that we can love but once?

L. Mar. I believe, my lord, the general experience of mankind will allow, that true love visits us but once in our lives.

L. Loui. Lord, sister, how you must be laugh'd at, shou'd you hint such an old-fashion'd notion among the Beau-monde.—Why there is scarce a man of quality, in England, who has not been violently in love with half a dozen fine women, at least, before he thinks of marrying; and if every one of them were to carry off but a corner of his heart, there cou'd scarce be an atom left for the poor lady, to whom he devotes his hand.

Bel. I am sure if that was true, I shou'd have no more heart than a mummy; for I have suffer'd love, many and many a time, and yet I think that I am heart-whole still, and have as large a stock of love to dispose of as ever.

Emi. You, very possibly, may have preserv'd your whole fund entire, sir; for it is my belief, "they never knew to love, who knew to change." Other passions, sometimes, assume its form, and impose even on ourselves. But the true, the real flame, subsists even 'till the lamp of life itself is quite extinguish'd.

L. Loui. [*aside*] She talks very feelingly upon this subject.

L. Brid. True, Miss Lawson; I will not blush to own that I am a fatal illustration of this sentiment; the redundancy of my regards for Mr. Feeble, even in the tomb, shall ever make me decline marriage.—To his memory have I consecrated my virgin bloom.

Bel.

Bel. Lord, sister, I never heard that you were in love, 'till now, and have often wonder'd mightily, that you did not marry some learned man.

L. Brid. The delicacy of my sentiments, brother, forbad a promulgation of my passion; tho' some years are elapsed, since the dear object was no more.

Bel. Ay, that there has, I'll be sworn.—'Tis at least five-and-twenty years, since poor Feeble departed, and he was dying for seven years before.—There's a fine antique, nephew; there's a true gem, my lord.

L. Bel. You will pardon me, sir, this is but a very poor copy.

Bel. Don't say so, my lord, you'll break my heart; I gave fifty guineas for it, and bespoke it three months ago.

L. Brid. Bespoke an antique, brother?

Bel. Yes, madam, bespoke it.

L. Bel. What then, he made it for you, sir?

Bel. No, no, no, he said it was the true original antinoüs, and it might be two thousand years of age, for ought he knew.

L. Loui. And so it may, uncle, if you can preserve it so long; and tho' it may not now, it will then certainly be an antique.

Bel. I'll go instantly, and find out the fellow that sold it to me, and if he cannot prove my ring a thousand years old, at least, I'll give him a hundred strokes with my ratan, and get my fifty guineas again. [Exit.

L. Mar. My poor uncle has generally some violent distrefs of his own making.

L. Loui. O this is nothing to the grief I saw him in last year, upon the blowing of a tulip, which he fancied would be black, and unfortunately proved to be red and yellow.

L. Bel. He, like many others, mistakes a passion for science, for the knowledge of it, and is, therefore, for ever liable to imposition. But we have all our failings, and let his pass. I think, Louisa, you gave up your opinion too tamely, I was in hopes we should have

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have a notable argument; but your withdrawing, has left Miss Lawson, and your sister, in possession of the field.

L. Loui. I have not courage sufficient, my lord, to encounter such odds; even Lady Bridget joined them, that was three to one: but if your lordship will declare on my side, I am ready to renew the attack, and have no doubt of victory.

L. Bel. Come on then, ladies, all brave men shou'd engage on the weaker side.

L. Mar. If numbers can give strength, my lord, I fancy there will be ten ready to list under Lady Louisa's banner, for one that will chuse to be encumber'd with the heavy armour of constancy, which our champions must put on. Come, General Lawson, rouse to the charge.

Emi. If our friends are fewer, madam, they will be more sincere, and of course, like British soldiers, braver than those venal troops, that are ready to fight under all colours.

L. Brid. Permit me, my lord, to bring this argument to a conclusion, by observing, that young ladies cannot expatiate on the thesis of love, without giving an intimation that they are adepts in the science; which would be rather an opprobrium, than an honour to persons not yet adult. But if your lordship pleases, you and I will support the argument, in a Socratic manner; and treat the subject, as they would have done in the Athenian porch.

L. Bel. I must beg to be excus'd, madam. I am by no means master of the subject, and propos'd it merely to hear what might be said on both sides. Some other time I shall be glad to hear your sentiments—at present, business calls me. *[Exit.*

L. Brid. At your option, my lord.

L. Loui. *[a side to L. Mary]* What shall I do to get away? I must feign myself ill.

L. Brid. Come, children, if you will attend me to my dressing-room, I may perhaps inform your understandings

standings with a lecture on la belle passion, provided you do not presume to reason, or interrupt me.

L. Loui. I am extremely ill on a sudden.—Your ladyship will excuse me.—Sister, pray help me to my chamber.

Emi. Will your ladyship permit me to attend you?

L. Loui. By no means, madam, I'll only trouble my sister.

L. Brid. Here, child, lean on me.—This is a precipitate attack. *[Exit all but Emily.]*

Emi. Oh! what a heavy task? to wear a chearful face, with a sad heart!—It will not long be so.—When in my father's power, I shall have leave, as well as cause, to weep. Yet let me snatch this precious interval, and give a loose to those fond sighs, that rend my bursting bosom! cruel, unkind.—Ah no! deceiv'd, unhappy Somerville.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. O miss, I am glad I have met you; the man swears it is a right cameo, a true antique. Lord, what's the matter, miss! what do you cry for? has sister Bridget said any thing to vex you? I'll lay my life she has, she is very spiteful at times, tho' good-natur'd in the main, I'll assure you. But if I was you, I wou'd not cry for her.

Emi. You do her wrong, sir; she never gave me cause to weep.

Bel. Well, miss, dry up your tears, I have something to tell you, that will make you glad; at least, I hope so.

Emi. That would be news, indeed.

Bel. Ay, so you'll say, when you hear it. But you must not mention it, miss. *(I don't know how to tell it to her neither.)* *[Aside.]*

Emi. If it be a secret, sir, you had better keep it still so.

Bel. No, miss, you must know it, and no body else; O yes, one more—can't you guess, now?

Emi.

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Emi. No, really, fir, I never was expert at riddles, even when my thoughts were free; now they are all employed. *[Going.]*

Bel. Pray stay a little, miss, I'll tell it you just now.

Emi. I shou'd be glad to be excus'd, at present, fir; I am not very well.

Bel. That happens very cross, now, and yet I am in a hurry too; I shall run away the very minute I have told you.—Did you ever see my birds? I have a parrot that speaks as plain as I do.

Emi. *[aside]* And as much to the purpose, I dare say.

Bel. What do you say, miss?

Emi. Nothing that signifies.—*[aside]* I shall be teized to death.

Bel. I'll teach that parrot, by to-morrow morning, to tell you that I love you, and will marry you.—I have done it. *[Runs off.]*

Emi. My poor ridiculous uncle! yet I can't help smiling at his disappointment, when he shall know his mistress for his niece. *[Exit.]*

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Egad, she smil'd tho'; that's a good sign; I did not see her laugh before, since she came into the house. I have seen as pretty women, that's certain, but never one that had such true antique beauty. When she is Mrs. Belmont, I shall have all the virtuosi coming to admire her neck, and the statuaries begging leave to take off her nose; but I won't suffer it. No, fir, Mrs. Belmont is indispos'd, she can't be seen this morning; you must come some other time, for I shan't expose her to the eye of curiosity, as I do my coins. I'll keep one rarity to myself at least. But I must take care that Lady Bridget don't come near her to infect her brain with dictionaries and romances.—I'll go directly, and take a house for her, near the Museum, and if I can but inspire her with a true taste for antiques, I shall positively be the happiest man alive.

[Exit.]

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A drawing-room.

Enter Lady Mary and Lady Louisa.

L. Loui. **I** Begin to have a thousand fears, sister, perhaps his servant has lost my letter; perhaps some accident has happen'd to Mr. Freeman, or he certainly wou'd not out-stay his time.

L. Mar. My dear Louisa, your watch and your passions keep pace; it wants some minutes of seven; but I cou'd wish from my heart, that almost any accident might prevent this meeting. I find myself sinking in my own esteem, for being in the secret. I wish you had not told me.

L. Loui. How can you be so ill-natur'd! Don't you know it was impossible to keep it from you?

L. Mar. That is, indeed, the best, tho' not the kindest excuse, you might have made, for such a confidence. But prithee, Louisa, how is this affair to end? You cannot surely be mad enough to think of marrying a person, that, for ought you know, may be a highwayman?

L. Loui. It is a great pity, Lady Mary, that your sentiments are so vastly confin'd. But you have never felt la belle passion, and I excuse you. You don't know, that from the instant we fall in love, we have a power of endowing the dear object of our affections, with truth, constancy, honour, in short, with every amiable quality; nor do we ever suppose that he can be deficient, even in the common acquisitions, either of wealth or rank.

L. Mar. I am surprized that the repeated disappointments, which such sanguine expectations have met with, even in romance, have not a little abated your ladyship's ardor. — But here comes your hero, and I, for this once, will act the part of a trusty confidante,

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fidante, by retiring, to prevent your being interrupted.

L. Loui. O! for heaven's sake, take care of Miss Lawson, and Aunt Bridget.

L. Mary. I shall prevent their coming near you, by staying in the next room. *[Exit.]*

Enter Younger Freeman.

Y. Free. Your ladyship sees the happiest of mankind, this moment, before you, since I am again permitted to behold that beauteous form, and breathe my raptures forth on this fair hand.

L. Loui. You are vastly polite, sir; but may I not suppose, that among the multiplicity of fine women you must have seen, during your absence, you may have met with one, to whom that compliment might be more properly address'd?

Y. Free. *[aside]* Sure he can't have heard any thing.

L. Loui. You seem to pause for a reply, sir.

Y. Free. Pause, madam—I pause indeed, with astonishment, at such an uncommon instance of humility—But if your ladyship will cast a look upon that mirror, it will fully answer your unjust suspicion.

L. Loui. I can't avoid being pleas'd at my doubts, sir, since they have afforded you an opportunity of clearing them so politely.

Y. Free. The tedious hours I have been compell'd to pass in absence, have been all employ'd in stupid business, looking over steward's accounts, and making leases, which wou'd have been quite insupportable, but that I hop'd, at my return, your ladyship wou'd kindly condescend to abridge my tortures, and suffer me to seize that beauteous hand.

L. Loui. O, Mr. Freeman!

Y. Free. By heaven, I cannot live a day, an hour, unless you promise to be mine; lillies and roses bloom to wait your coming—now, now, my charmer, name the happy hour. O how delightful is a true love match! Say, at what time my chariot shall attend.

L. Loui.

L. Loui. I am frighted at your transports, I cannot now resolve.

Y. Free. Here let me wait then, on my bended knee, 'till you pronounce my doom.

L. Loui. Pray rise, I——

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. O Louisa, my brother hearing that you were not well, has sent word he is coming up to see you; that gentleman had better make his way down the back stairs: I will delay my lord, for a minute, in the next room, but pray, sir, make haste. [*Exit.*]

Y. Free. And must I leave you undetermined? Will you not suffer me to see you again this night? May I not return the same way, some hours hence, when the family are retir'd to rest, and there can be no interruption? O speak, my angel!

L. Loui. I am so terrified, I know not what to say; but pray be gone, this moment, even tho' you shou'd return.

Y. Free. That permission has given me new life, and now I fly. [*Exit.*]

Enter Lord Belmont, and Lady Mary.

L. Bel. I am glad to hear she is better. — Louisa, what has been the matter? You tremble, and look pale.

L. Loui. My nerves are weak, my lord, you know that's a common complaint.

L. Bel. It is indeed become too general; but I flatter'd myself, that a good constitution, and regularity, might have exempted you from it, as I believe it usually has its foundation in late hours, and want of exercise. But we shall go into the country, in a few days, to remedy these evils.

L. Mar. I rejoice to hear your lordship say so, for at this lovely season of the year, I grow quite weary of London.

L. Loui. [*aside*] I have the comfort to think I shall not be of the party.

D

L. Bel.

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L. Bel. Come, ladies, let us adjourn to the drawing-room, I left Lady Bridget and Miss Lawson there; company is good for you, Louisa.

L. Mar. We attend your lordship. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. *A street.*

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

Sir Char. Where can she have fled, my dear, unhappy Emily? But wherefore do I call her mine? She surely must have escaped with her unknown gallant—I need not then defer my journey longer—I have bid adieu to happiness, and her, and 'tis no matter where I wander now. [*Young Freeman enters as from the garden, crosses the stage, and exits.*] Have I my sight? or is it fancy conjures up this fiend! By heaven, that is the man—yet sure I must mistake. He came out of that door too, Lord Belmont's garden-door! What! has he rivall'd me in friendship as in love! this is too much; my honour is now at stake, Lord Belmont must account for this proceeding; for tho' impos'd upon by female artifice, I will not be man's dupe. [Exit.]

SCENE III. *A library, Lord Belmont discover'd.*

Enter Sir Charles.

L. Bel. Welcome, my dear Charles: is your servant arriv'd? Have you discover'd who this ignis fatuus, this unknown spark is? You seem disorder'd.

Sir Char. My lord, I come to you for information, I'll be no longer trifled with—you must explain.

L. Bel. [*aside*]. He has found out that Emily is here, who cou'd reveal it?—If then you know the secret, Charles; how can you blame me?

Sir Char. Not blame you, sir! but I will yet have patience—such mean, clandestine doings, are unworthy of your birth. You wrung my story from me,

to betray me—think what a light I see you in, then let your crime upbraid you.

L. Bel. By heaven, I never did disclose your confidence, nor—

Sir Char. For shame, for shame, my lord, wound not the character of manhood thus, nor sink below my race.

L. Bel. Sir Charles, this is a language I am not us'd to hear; but lovers, like lunatics, have leave to rail, when the mad fit is on them: I think her innocent, and will defend her.

Sir Char. You think her innocent! you! the abettor of her guilt; her lover's confidant!

L. Bel. I blush to own that I have been his friend; ill-temper'd, un-bred man.

Sir Char. I am not quite so placid as your lordship, I confess; you are the true French coustier, my travels are to come: Born and bred up a Briton, I may be rough, but am sincere—no flatterer, no false friend.

L. Bel. I even disdain to answer your low sarcasm, but am most glad that Emily has escap'd you.

Sir Char. I doubt it not, but will not waste my time in fruitless altercation.

L. Bel. The sooner this is ended, sir, the better. At six to-morrow morning, if you please, we will use men's, not women's weapons.

Sir Char. Name the place.

L. Bel. Hyde-Park.

Sir Char. You may depend on me. But as that time or place will not admit of parley, I now conjure you to answer me one question.

L. Bel. Speak it, sir.

Sir Char. If I survive, it will be of some consequence, if not, it will be buried with me. Who is the happy man, that both my mistress and my friend have sacrificed me to?

L. Bel. Insolent man! how should I know the person?

Sir Char. In vain you strive to hide him from me—were he ennobled with all the honours majesty can

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give, he can't be rais'd above resentment ; and were he sprung from the lowest of mankind, my Emily's love has dignified his meanness, and made him, in point of happiness at least, far my superior. Therefore, again, I do intreat you tell me.

L. Bel. There is something very extraordinary in your persisting in a request, that is impossible for me to grant ; for, by my honour, I do not know the man whom you suppose your mistress has preferr'd, nor ever heard his name.

Sir Char. Not know the person, whom I this very hour saw come out of your house, by the back-door that leads into your garden ?

L. Bel. You must mistake, Sir Charles, it cannot be.

Sir Char. Do I know you, am I awake, or in my senses ? If these things are true, I surely saw him issue from your garden-door ; his image is too strongly fix'd upon my wounded memory, to think I can mistake ; the moon shone bright upon him.

L. Bel. You have amaz'd me, yet still I think it is impossible.

Sir Char. My dear Lord Belmont, if I have injur'd you, by imagining you to be this unknown person's friend, therefore no longer mine, what apology, what atonement can I make ?

L. Bel. Indeed, Sir Charles, you have wrong'd both truth and friendship ; I never had a friend I dared to injure, or disclaim ; yet, if it was not a vision that you saw, you are in some degree excusable—yet, why shou'd he come here ?

Sir Char. That is indeed a mystery—but as I cou'd not imagine he came to any one within these walls, except your lordship, I hope you'll pardon the frenzy of a man who thought himself aggriev'd in the most tender points, his love and friendship.

L. Bel. Sir Charles, your seeming motives for resentment were so strong, that I can readily forget the effects—I hope we are friends again—but let the
con-

conviction of your present error lead you to doubt, at least, the certainty of some former appearances.

Sir Char. O, my too generous friend! let me be happy still in your esteem, but banish from my mind all thoughts of love. Her guilt is fully proved; she fled, that fatal night, from Bath, with her seducer. Curses blast him!

L. Bel. What reason have you to think so?—[*aside*] 'Tis plain he does not know she's here, nor can I now inform him.

Sir Char. My servant is return'd, and brings this sad account; he left her poor unhappy father setting out in pursuit of—I cannot name her, my once lovely Emily.

L. Bel. In such a scene of complicated distress, may she not have fled for refuge to some friend? Why will you think the worst?

Sir Char. O no, my lord, she had no friend to fly to; for sure he is the worst of foes, as well as villains, that wou'd destroy her innocence. I doubt not but the wretch may abandon her to want and infamy.

L. Bel. I cannot think that she is in his power. It is improbable that a well-educated maid shou'd take so rash a step, but on a certainty of marriage with the man she lov'd.

Sir Char. I shou'd rejoice to think as you do; and were there but the slightest foundation for hope, wou'd gladly rest upon it. But all my doubts are at an end; I am therefore determined to quit England. but not 'till I have found the man, who has robbed me of my peace, and Emily. I'll go this moment in pursuit of him.

L. Bel. I shall be glad if you'll return and sup with me; we shall be quite alone—I shall be anxious to know what discoveries you make. I also will endeavour to find out who this same incognito can visit here.

Sir Char. I shall with pleasure attend your lordship, provided I don't trespass on you—We sleepless wretches are sometimes tempted to break in upon those hours the happy give to rest.

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L. Bel. You will oblige, and not distress me: name your hour.

Sir Char. Eleven, if agreeable.

L. Bel. Quite so, 'till then adieu. [*Exit Sir Charles.*]
If Sir Charles Somerville is to be credited, what must I think? Who cou'd that villain come to? For such, by all accounts, he must be. Emily continued in the drawing-room from dinner 'till I left it. She scarce yet knows the way to her own chamber, much less that through the garden; and yet to her, and her alone, he must have come.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. A gentleman desires to see your lordship.

L. Bel. Shew him in. [*Exit Servant.*]

Enter Mr. Southerne.

South. It is so long since I have seen your lordship, I am not surpriz'd that you don't know me.—My name is Southerne.

L. Bel. I am very glad to see you, sir.

South. You were but a child, my lord, when I left London, on the death of my first wife.

L. Bel. I am sorry, sir, not to have been better known to so near a relation. Pray how does my cousin Emily? I used to visit her often, while she was at school.

South. She is very well, my lord, and that's my greatest grief. If she had died with her mother, she wou'd have been happy, and so wou'd I.

L. Bel. You will pardon me, sir, but that thought seems so very unnatural.

South. Not at all, not at all, my lord; she has been a plague to me, ever since she was born; and my present lady, Mrs. Southerne, always said she wou'd be so. And Mrs. Southerne, let me tell your lordship, is a parlous wise woman, and never was mistaken in her whole life; at least, I never thought her in the wrong, and therefore never contradicted her.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. I should be sorry to think Mrs. Southerne never err'd in judgment, for then my cousin must have verified this infallible lady's prediction.

South. And so she has, my lord. I, like a careful father, as I was, and in regard to her poor mother's memory, provided a proper and convenient match for her; my neighbour Winterbottom, my lord, a man pretty near my own age, one that was fit to conduct and manage such a raw, headstrong chit, as she; a discreet person, let me tell you; and a great favourite of Mrs. Southerne's.

L. Bel. You cou'd not surely think of marrying my cousin to a person as old as her father, sir?

South. Why not, why not, my lord, she made no objection to his years, but truly she dislik'd his family and person, because he was not a fine snock-fac'd beau, and cou'd not trace his pedigree up to Adam, forsooth; a conceited undutiful minx as she was.

L. Bel. I cannot blame my cousin's spirit, sir; her birth, youth, and fortune, entitle her to a very different match; but were she a beggar, sir, she had better serve, to earn her bread, than wed the man she hates.

South. Very fine, my lord; but stay 'till you hear the end of that high spirit.

L. Bel. Whatever her conduct may have been, sir, I fear yours towards her, has justified it.

South. No, no, I was too tender of her; when she got into the pouts, and cry'd and roar'd, I promised not to force her to this marriage; but if she wou'd be a dutiful child, and consent to it, I wou'd take her with me to Bath; she promis'd she wou'd try to obey me, and, in an ill hour, to Bath I brought her.

L. Bel. And there, I suppose, she married the first man that ask'd her.

South. Worse, much worse than that: she sent a fine spark, a baronet, I think he was, to ask her for his wife, tho' she knew very well, that Mrs. Southerne

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had pass'd her word she shou'd marry Winterbottom; and did she think I wou'd make my lady a liar? No, no, I sent him a packing, and order'd madam to prepare for Southerne-hall directly.

L. Bel. May I not presume to say, sir, that this proceeding was too violent?

South. Pray don't interrupt me, my lord, and you shall hear how this gentle lady behaved.—About eleven that night, when I was smoking my pipe, I heard her squall; I ran into her chamber, and there I found the knight, and another of her lovers, I suppose, tilting at each other; I beat down their passes with my crutch, the candle fell to the ground, and before the servants could bring light, madam and all were fled.

L. Bel. Have you heard nothing of her since?

South. Not a syllable, nor wou'd I ever have enquired about her, but that my lady's honour is engaged to Winterbottom. Now, if you can assist me to discover where she is, I'll bring a replevin for her, and carry her home directly. If Winterbottom will marry her, so—if not, I'll keep her close enough to prevent her bringing any farther disgrace on me, while I live, I warrant you.

L. Bel. Have you found out who the gentleman was, who fought with the baronet?

South. Yes, her maid Sally, a forward young flirt, like her mistress, told the servants that his name was Freeman.

L. Bel. [*aside*] Freeman! that's something gain'd—a thought occurs.

South. Now I beg, my lord, that you will send out immediately to all the inns and lodging-houses about town, to look for Emily; my servants shall go one way, yours another, and I think we can't well miss of her; though London is hugely grown, since I was here, that's certain.

L. Bel. You may be sure, sir, that I shall take every proper method for the service of my cousin; but it is not

not by a replevin, that her character is to be recovered, though her person may. You, as her father, sir, are first bound to do her justice; to call the man who has wrong'd her to a strict account, and make him clear her fame by instant marriage.

South. What! I call any one to account! I fight for her! Not I, truly. I am a civil magistrate, the law is my weapon, and if I can reclaim her by that, I will.

L. Bel. But what are we to do, sir, with the fair fugitive, when we have recovered her?

South. Even what your lordship pleases; you shall be heartily welcome to dispose of her to whom you will for me. Try if you can make a match for her, suited to her birth and youth, since you don't approve of that I had proposed. But not a penny will I give to buy her a fop, or a coxcomb, or a title; yet if either of those fellows she went off with, will marry her without money, why I'll e'en give my consent, that I may be no longer plagu'd with her; tho' I am very much afraid that Mrs. Southerne will be angry.

L. Bel. You talk, sir, as if your daughter were already found.

South. Why, my lord, if she shou'd never be found, I can't help it: but as I am come so far, I'll e'en stay in town 'till the horses are rested.—Poor things! they have not had such a journey this many a long year.

L. Bel. Sir, if you will leave the management of this affair to me, I'll act as if my cousin were my sister; but remember, sir, you have promis'd your consent to the baronet, if he shou'd again solicit it.

South. Ay, ay, my lord, he shall have her, if he chuses to wait for her fortune 'till my death. I must now go smoke my pipe. In the morning I will call upon you, and pay my respects to Lady Bridget and my brother Belmont.

L. Bel. I wish you a good night, sir.

South.

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South. I believe I shall sleep pretty sound, for I am very weary. [Exit.]

L. Bel. And I no less of you;—was there ever such a brute!—But this Freeman, now we have found his name, he must have more cunning than a fox, if two such brisk hunters, as Sir Charles and I, cannot unearth him. I will first try the ground at home, and that immediately. [Exit.]

SCENE IV. *A drawing-room.*

Enter Lady Mary and Lady Louisa.

L. Loui. Was there ever such a lucky escape, Lady Mary?

L. Mary. I know not how to consider it in that light, Louisa, I am almost sorry that I prevented my brother's meeting Mr. Freeman, it must have brought on an eclairsissement, which I am of opinion is absolutely necessary.

L. Loui. You are not in earnest, sure! you cou'd not be guilty of any thing so inhuman!

L. Mary. I think it wou'd have been rather kind than cruel.

L. Loui. O, absolutely barbarous! *[aside]* I fancy she is vex'd at not having a lover herself; I'll not trust her any farther.

L. Mary. Our sentiments are so different, upon many subjects, that I am not surpriz'd they do not accord on this. What objection can Mr. Freeman have to Lord Belmont's being made acquainted with his passion? My brother's tenderness demands our confidence, and it is robbing him of what he has fairly purchas'd, to with-hold it.

L. Mary. How often must I tell you, Lady Mary, that it is I, and not Mr. Freeman, that wou'd have this affair kept secret.—There is something so indelicate in public courtship and weddings, that I cannot bear the thought.

L. Mar.

L. Mar. You'll pardon me, Louisa, if I pronounce it much more indelicate for a young lady to receive the addresses of a lover privately, than if authorized by the approbation of her friends: in this case, her compliance might appear a condescension to their desires; in the other, it looks too much like granting an indulgence to her own.

L. Loui. Your ladyship has stated the case, as you call it, with all the wisdom and gravity of a lawyer. I hope you will be married to a judge, sister; you'll be a vast help to him in his business, and may save him the expence of a clerk. But pray, Madam Coke upon Littleton, in the aforesaid case, is not the young lady to be considered as the principal party, and is it not quite as necessary she shou'd be pleas'd, as any of her kindred and parentage?

L. Mary. Doubtless, my dear; but will the approbation of her friends prevent her liking?

L. Loui. Why, yes, I think it might.—For example, were my uncle to recommend a husband to me, he must be a virtuoso; if my aunt, he must be a pedant; if my brother, he must be a philosopher; and if my dear Maria was to chuse for me, he must possess every great and amiable quality, have a large fortune and a title. Now, as I am not vain enough to hope for the last, and have a mortal aversion to all the other characters, I will e'en chuse for myself, and then I shall have no body to complain of.

L. Mary. Nor to—remember that, Louisa.

L. Loui. I hope I shall have no cause, but if I shou'd, I detest compassion of all things; I shou'd not like even to have your pity.

L. Mary. I am sorry for it, because I'm afraid you'll want it.

L. Loui. Psha!

Enter Emily, follow'd by Mr. Belmont.

Emil. Indeed, sir, you do me too much honour, and I wish it was in my power to make a suitable return.

Bel.

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Bel. Pray speak softly, miss, don't you see my nieces!—It was only a little present I was offering to Miss Lawson. You know my parrot, Louisa?

L. Loui. Which of them, sir?

Bel. The handsomest, to be sure, niece; do press her to accept of it.

L. Loui. Miss Lawson, my uncle requests that you will not refuse such a trifle, as he offers; it is a thing of no sort of value, indeed, I think of neither use, nor ornament.

Bel. Not so despicable, neither, madam.

L. Mar. However highly you may rate it, sir, there is a degree of politeness in lessening the value of what we bestow.

Bel. Circumstances vary cases, niece; there are some things we should not depreciate.

Emi. I rate the gift so far above my worth, sir, that nothing shall ever tempt me to accept of it.

L. Loui. Bless me, Miss Lawson, you are the very paragon of humility; tho' I confess I think you are right not to be teized with such a disagreeable animal; a thing, that by pretending to imitate human speech, puts one out of humour with the sound of our own voice, as much as a monkey does with our species; I hate parrots, and monkeys.

Bel. Yes, but you love fops, and coxcombs, don't you? Let me tell you, madam, your tongue runs before your wit, you don't know what you are abusing.

L. Loui. I shou'd be sorry to find fault with any thing you lik'd, sir, but I thought it was merely as a naturalist, that you kept such a number of parrots; I did not think it was for the pleasure of hearing them talk.

Bel. I can tell you, madam, I wou'd rather hear them chatter, than you.

L. Mar. Yet they sometimes cast reflections, mal a propos, as well as my sister, sir.

Bel. Pray, ladies, let me draw breath.—Was there ever such a couple of vixens!—(aside to Emily) Don't

mind them, miss, but consider what I have said; I am sure it is intirely for your good I speak. You don't know what a vast collection of pretty things I have, and they shall all be yours.

Emi. Where things are in themselves indifferent, sir, persuasions and temptations may avail; but where our resolutions are founded in reason, nothing can or shou'd alter them.

Bel. Hush, hush, miss, not a word more upon this subject, I have a great deal of business upon my hands; but pray, miss, do think about it. I'll get you a very fine noesgay to-morrow, I'll pull my paul diack tulip for you; the root cost me twenty pounds, but you shall have it. Sure you won't be cruel to me now! Don't say one word, for I must run, and you shall have the tulip at any rate. [*Exit.*]

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Your servant, ladies, was not that Mr. Belmont that left you? I suppose he has been entertaining you with some of his curiosities?

L. Loui. I think he is himself a greater curiosity, than any in his collection, my lord, but I fancy he has a mind to dispose of them all together, and means to give a bargain of them to Miss Lawton.

Emi. He has done me the honour to offer me abundance of rarities, madam, but I am not disposed to receive favours that I cannot return; therefore his treasures are all safe for me.

L. Mar. I fancy he loads his gifts with hard conditions, and would persuade you to accept himself along with them. Is it not so, Miss Lawton?

L. Bel. I congratulate you on your conquest, Emily; your eyes can do wonders, it seems, and light up sparks in dying embers.

Emi. I rather think, my lord, that Mr. Belmont's flame is of that kind, which dying fires emit, to shew their near extinction; and the faint blaze has, but by accident,

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accident, cast it's pale light on me; any other object might have been brighten'd by the same glimmer.

L. Bel. You wrong my uncle's taste; I have not heard of his proposing to marry any lady these five years. Before that time, he used to be generally in love twice a year, and had his summer and winter passions, which he constantly chang'd with his cloaths for the season.

L. Mar. I am surpriz'd, my lord, that among such a variety of mistresses, he never found one that wou'd marry him; his person must have been tolerable, when he was young; his family and fortune unexceptionable.

L. Bel. Be assur'd, sister, that was not the case; but by the time he had brought the lady to think favourably of him, he began to discover some imperfection in her. Perhaps her nose was a hair's breadth longer or shorter than it shou'd be, according to the exact rules of proportion; a foot, or a finger, perhaps, disgusted him; on which, he immediately quitted his pursuit, and went in search of another model.

L. Loui. It is happy the men are not so nice, now-a-days, or we shou'd never be able to fix a lover.

L. Bel. I fancy, Louisa, that must be at all times a difficult matter to accomplish; a fine woman will, doubtless, captivate many, but there is something more than beauty, necessary to preserve her conquest over one.

L. Loui. Why, so they say, my lord; but I protest I can't credit it. It is impossible, I think, for a woman to lose her power, while she retains her beauty.

L. Mar. A moment's recollection must furnish you with such a number of instances to contradict your assertion, Louisa, that I'm afraid the argument will drop, on your conviction; and I shou'd like vastly to have it carried on.

L. Loui. O! never fear, we'll keep it up; but I won't admit of odds; 'tis only with my brother I argue.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. Well then, I grant, that while beauty lasts, it will always have admirers. But these, Louisa, are but pageants to a conqueror; the triumph must be found at home, in the heartfelt love and esteem of a man of sense and honour.

L. Loui. True, my lord, but that same beauty, that causes admiration and attention in other men, will necessarily preserve our husband's love.

L. Bel. By no means, Louisa; possession damps the ardor of desire; merit alone can keep the flame alive, and hinder every wanton gale from blowing it abroad; that, like the vestal fire, must be preserv'd by constant watching.

L. Loui. By your account, my lord, a married woman has just as bad a life as a vestal, if her whole time is to be spent in keeping one spark alive.

L. Bel. I will allow her task is full as arduous, tho' more pleasing. Men are naturally inconstant; and a husband may sometimes see a woman fairer than his wife; but 'tis her fault, if in the whole circle, he can find one that so well deserves his love; whose temper, manners, conduct, and behaviour, are so much suited to his sentiments; who knows no wish or will, but to please him—these charms, the homeliest woman may acquire; without them, the fairest form that ever struck our eyes, cannot retain one heart.

L. Mar. Indeed, my lord, we are vastly obliged to you for this excellent lesson; and ought to think ourselves extremely happy in such a sensible and kind instructor.

L. Bel. You make me so, as I hope that these slight hints I have thrown out, may be of use to you. But why so grave, Miss Lawson? I hope I have not made you melancholy.

Emi. I have heard your lordship, with the utmost pleasure, and most sincerely wish, that my whole sex had done so too.

L. Loui. I think tho', we ought not to wish that the other sex had heard his lordship; it wou'd make some of them horridly insolent.

L. Bel.

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L. Bel. Be assur'd, Louisa, that I have only spoke the general opinion of every rational man. But a truce with the subject; for I flatter myself, you have no need of any other monitor, but your own sense and virtue. Pray, Miss Lawson, do you know a Mr. Freeman?

Emi. No, my lord.

L. Bel. She seems not at all embarrass'd. [*Aside.*

L. Loui. [*aside to Lady Mary*] What can he mean?

L. Bel. Is he of your acquaintance, Lady Mary? Or of yours, Louisa?

L. Mar. I am not at all acquainted with him, my lord.

L. Loui. One knows such a number of people, by meeting them in public, that it is impossible to remember names; we might, perhaps, have met such a person at Soho, or at Almack's. Sister, shall we go see my aunt? I think some one said she was not well.—Will you come, Miss Lawson?

Emi. I'll wait on your ladyship. [*Exeunt Lady Mary and Lady Louisa.*

L. Bel. Stop a moment, Emily, I have but just time to tell you, that your father is arriv'd, and I have seen him.

Emi. Is he in health, my lord? I greatly fear this hasty journey may have injur'd him; that wou'd compleat my wretchedness.

L. Bel. Quiet your fears, he is in perfect health, and has promis'd to give his consent to your marrying Sir Charles Somerville; or, in short, whomever elle you please.

Emi. How happy wou'd this kindness once have made me! now 'tis an aggravation of my sorrow, and comes like a reprieve, when execution's past. Yet still I thank my father; he will not press me then to the detested match he once propos'd. O let me fly to him, my lord, and on these trembling knees receive his blessing.

L. Bel.

A COMEDY.

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L. Bel. You must not think of seeing him this night; to-morrow he'll be here, that's time enough. I flatter myself, that a very little time will serve to clear this mystery.

Emi. O grant it heaven! let my poor heart be eas'd of this sad load, which even imputed guilt can cause, and conscious innocence but ill sustain; then let me yield that heart to undivided, and unceasing sorrow, for my lost Somerville.

L. Bel. Dry up your tears, he may not yet be lost. I now intreat you will, for a little time, be guided by me; I wou'd not have you suffer my sisters to perceive any change in your looks, tho' I hope there will soon be a material one in your situation.

Emi. I shall endeavour to obey your lordship. [*Exit.*]

L. Bel. What am I now to think? that Emily's innocent, I must believe; I took her on a sudden, unprepar'd, and yet she answer'd with such calm indifference as common questions usually produce. I'll keep a watchful eye upon Louisa; she was not calm, nor did she answer fairly to the question. — I fear the stain comes nearer than I thought; and yet I cannot think so meanly of my conduct towards her, as to suppose she fears me; why then shou'd she conceal the most important action of her life from her sincerest friend?

But men and women both have their caprices.

We deal too hardly, when we call it vice. [*Exit.*]

END of the THIRD ACT

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ACT

ACT IV. SCENE I.

*Young Freeman's lodgings ; he is discover'd on a couch,
with a book in his hand.*

Y. Free. "IS she not more than painting can express,
Or youthful poets fancy when they
love?" [*Looks at his watch.*

'Tis now near ten ; at eleven, I'll make another glorious effort to carry off the prize. Her last words were, " Pray be gone, this instant, tho' you shou'd
" return." — Dear creature ! and shall I not accept thy gentle invitation ? I'll quarter her arms on my chariot, as if she were an heiress. Lord, how it will fret the sober family in Lombard-street, who have only a cypher on their coach. [*Rings a bell.*

Enter Ralph.

Are my cloaths come ?

Ralph. Yes, please your honour.

Y. Free. Get out my white and silver, prepare every thing to dress, and step to the next coach-maker ; I want a chariot and six flying horses, to be got ready in half an hour : tell the fellow, I shall deal with him for an elegant equipage, in a few days. [*Exit Ralph.*

Enter Elder Freeman.

[*Aside.*] What brings him here ? He is worse than the devil, and comes before the termination of his contract.

E. Free. Well, brother, have you seen the lady ?

Y. Free. Why, Jack, I thought you men of business were more exact ? Do you think I can't hold it 'till Monday, that you call upon me before the three days are out ? This wou'd be enough to hurt a man's credit in the city ; and why it shou'd not be deem'd a mark of insolvency, at this end of the town, I can't conceive.

E. Free. As you seem to think a citizen has no ideas but what relate to trade, I shall, upon your own premises, explain my visit. When we have but a slight
opinion

opinion of our debtor, and find him tardy, we think it necessary to observe his motions : but where a man of honour is concerned, tho' we may doubt his power, we don't suspect his principles, and therefore never watch his motions.

Y. Free. Which is, in plain English, to say, you look upon me as a scoundrel.—Votre serviteur, tres humble.

E. Free. You have drawn this sarcasm upon yourself, by presuming too hastily to explain my motives for this visit; the irksomeness of which gives but a bad idea of your integrity. Those who act fairly, need not fear inspection.

Y. Free. Indeed, brother, you seem to me quite on the *qui vive*, always in a disposition to quarrel, which is a mighty improper temper of mind to visit a lover in, who shou'd be all tun'd to harmony and joy.

E. Free. The mind shou'd be at peace within itself, to feel those charming sensations; they must arise from conscious worth—not even the power of beauty can awake them, in mean, dishonest hearts; I therefore shou'd rejoice, that you were capable of feeling their happy influence.

Y. Free. Ay, now you talk something like a brother, and in return for your good nature, I will acquaint you, that I am this moment preparing to visit my charmer.

E. Free. Surely you have been much to blame, to delay so long; this is not a proper time of night, to wait upon a woman of fashion.

Y. Free. Not for a tradesmen, I grant you, but we pretty fellows are welcome at all hours.

E. Free. Prithee, Harry, lay by the coxcomb, and tho' you don't act, speak at least, like a rational creature; what cou'd prevent your visiting the lady, all this evening; upon the plan I propos'd, and you agreed to?

Y. Free. Why, really, Jack, you are so very impetuous, you won't give a man time to answer your

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why's, and your wherefores; but if it will satisfy you, I did wait on the lady, this very evening; and am, by her appointment, to see her again this night. I then hope to prevail on her to step into an hired equipage with me, and for the rest of my life, to drive in my own.

E. Free. I don't understand you, sure; is she so romantically smitten, that she can't wait a few days, 'till her friends and yours have adjusted matters for her honour and security? There can be no doubt, that my father will gladly receive her as his daughter, and make a proper settlement, since she is inclin'd to honour us with her alliance.—She cannot have had time to consult her friends.

F. Free. No, truly, nor ever shall, with my consent. Why, Jack, it is impossible you shou'd be so ignorant as you seem; you'll never be a rich man, that's certain. There are coups de maitres in trade, as well as love; and if a man has not courage to make a push, he will never make a fortune.—Consult her friends, ha, ha, ha!

E. Free. I thought, sir, when we parted, you had determined to act like an honest man, and deal upon the square?

F. Free. Why, faith, Jack, you over-awed me then; but being at present a little more assur'd of success, I laugh at your qualms, because I am sure that, by and by, you will laugh with me; and I shou'd deserve to be eternally laugh'd at, if I were to be preach'd out of such an opportunity of making my fortune; and so, my dear moral merchant, your most obedient, for I have scarce time to dress. [*Exit.*]

E. Free. Incurable wretch! were I acquainted with the lady's name, I wou'd this moment alarm her family, and prevent her ruin. (*looks at his watch*) It is now near the time I am to meet Lord Belmont, upon business at his house; I cannot break my word; but that finished, I will return, and watch every motion of this worthless brother, whom, if I can, (in spite of all the ties of blood) I will detect. [*Exit.*]

Enter

Enter Younger Freeman and Ralph.

Y. Free. What's to be done? A plague on that stupid, money-making brother.

Ralph. Upon my word, sir, I don't know what you'll do; they say it is too late to get six horses for a journey, or even a fine chariot, to night.

Y. Free. Why did not you go sooner?

Ralph. Because you ordered me to get your things to dress.

Y. Free. 'Tis my own fault; why did I waste my time with that dull fellow? But run, fly, try at the inns, get me even a post-chaise. Do any thing to make dispatch.

[*Exit Ralph.*
I cou'd hang myself for being such a negligent block-head, to defer a thing of so much consequence, 'till the last moment; if I shou'd lose this night, 'tis ten to one but my evil genius, Jack, may take it into his head to describe me as a fortune-hunter, in to-morrow's news-papers, and put Louisa on her guard against me.

Enter Ralph.

Have you succeeded? Have you got the chaise?

Ralph. No, sir, but I have done much better. As your brother went out, I heard him say he had business with Lord Belmont, and order his chariot there.

Y. Free. Business there! and at this late hour!—no matter—he cannot guess my scheme.—He has some plodding accounts to settle in a hurry, perhaps, with his methodical lordship, which may be of use in detaining him from any chance of discovering what is going forward.

Ralph. True, sir; now what I propose is this; I'll wait on your honour there, and take James with me, and decoy your brother's servants to the ale-house—treat them with plenty of liquor, while James drives the chariot round the house to the garden-door, and waits ready to whip away, when your honour and the lady come to him.

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Y. Pres. Bravo, Ralph.—Fortune seems inclined to befriend me, and my brother shall, at last, be a means of my success, in spite of his mechanical morality.—Follow me. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Lord Belmont's library. Lord Belmont at a table, with papers before him.*

L. Bel. I am now ready for my banker. What a pleasure there is in regularity! Yet many men, rather than take the trouble of settling their accounts, suffer their fortunes to moulder thro' their hands, without enjoyment, and scarce find themselves in possession of an estate before they feel the loss of it. I have a noble surplus now for exigencies; I mean those of others, more than my own. For the man, whose oeconomy is properly regulated, seldom feels the force of that sharp word; and I would treasure up my wealth in acts of liberality.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Mr. Southerne is come again to wait upon your lordship.

L. Bel. Desire him to walk in. [*Exit Servant.*]
What can provoke him to return at this hour? I hoped he wou'd have allowed both himself and me to rest this night,

Enter Mr. Southerne.

South. Finding myself comfortably refreshed after my pipe and tankard, my lord, and John having informed me that the horses are in good heart, and able to set out to-morrow; I thought it was as good to pay my respects to my brother and sister Belmont, to night, as to lose another day in compliments. Therefore, if you please, I'll wait on them directly, and take my leave.

L. Bel. It shall be as you please, sir; but I am surprized how you can think of leaving town, 'till you have found your daughter.

South. Why, look'e, my lord, I am an old man, and have no time to lose from the comforts of life. It is uncertain whether ever Emily may be found; and I want to get home to my own dear, who will nourish and cherish me. However, if you think there is any chance of finding my daughter, I don't much care if I stay one day longer.

L. Bel. That is all I ask, sir.

South. Well then, my lord, I will bide at your request, and the horses will be the better for it. And since I don't go out of town in the morning, if it is agreeable, I'll stay and sup with your lordship.

L. Bel. I am sorry, sir, I happen to be engaged, but am certain that Lady Bridget, and Mr. Belmont, will be glad of your company. I will acquaint them you are here, and return immediately to conduct you to them. [*aside*] I must take care that Emily be not seen. [*Exit.*]

South. What a deal of fuss and ceremony is here? Cou'd not he let me go with him? But as he has no wife, may be he is gone to order something for supper, as I used to do, when I was a widower. Ah! I wish I had continued so still, and then I need not be afraid of any body! My nephew is a wise man, that's certain.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. I am ready now, sir, to attend you; but must entreat you will not mention Emily's misfortune to my aunt or sisters.

South. Come then, my lord; and since you desire it, I will not. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *A drawing-room.*

Enter Lady Bridget, Lady Mary, and Lady Louisa.

L. Brid. I am doubtful whether I shall recollect Mr. Southerne; it is a good many years since I have seen him; and I was, at that æra, extremely young; in my infantine state, as I may say.

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Enter Lord Belmont, and Mr. Southerne.

South. Your servant, sister; you look purely, faith; not a whit alter'd: my poor first wife was a great deal younger than you, and yet she is gone: but we must all go, one time or other, they say.

L. Bel. My sisters, sir. — [*Presents Lady Mary and Lady Louisa.*]

South. Good pretty girls, my nieces are; the youngest of them is something like my wife, when she was her age; do you remember your aunt, young lady?

L. Loui. No, sir; I don't believe I ever saw her.

South. Perhaps not. — Well, Sister Biddy, and are you jolly, old girl? You thrive rarely.

L. Brid. Your phrase is somewhat of the coarsest, Mr. Southerne.

South. Why, yes, we all grow coarse, as we grow old, to be sure. I do remember when you were almost as slender as that young miss there. But where's my brother Belmont, the philosopher, as we us'd to call him? Is he poking after cockle-shells, and old bits of copper, still, my lord?

L. Bel. My uncle, sir, is true to his former taste — but I suppose they have not acquainted him with your being here; I'll send to let him know it. You'll be so good as to excuse me, sir, as I am engag'd. Ladies, good night; I leave Mr. Southerne in your charge; pray take care of him. [*Exit.*]

L. Loui. [*aside*] He sups abroad; that's lucky.

L. Mar. What do you say, sister?

L. Loui. Not material.

L. Mar. Pray, sir, have not you a daughter by my aunt? A very accomplish'd young lady, I have heard my brother say.

South. Yes, yes, madam, I have a daughter; and she ought to be accomplish'd, as you call it: she has cost me many a fair pound; she was no less than ten years at a boarding-school.

L. Loui. Was not that rather too long, sir, to let a young lady remain out of her father's house? She must have been a perfect stranger to you.

South. Why, truly, madam, so she was; but Mrs. Southerne said it was for her good; and one must give up a great deal for the sake of one's children, you know.

L. Brid. I am surpriz'd, Mr. Southerne, you did not think proper to present Miss Southerne's duty to me, nor her respects to these young ladies her cousins; in this you have certainly been deficient, sir.

South. Why, really, sister, as neither you or they ever set eyes on her, I can't say I thought it of any great consequence.

L. Brid. Notwithstanding our mutual misfortune in that case, sir, proper decorum shou'd be observed. But I shall not on this occasion enter into any contest of sarcasm, or reciprocation of smartness.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Brother Southerne, I am very glad to see you; how does my niece, and your wife, and all your children? Egad, you are a fine old Grecian, and wou'd make a very curious bust; it might pass for an antique; will you sit to Ryfbrack for me?

South. As to the latter part of your discourse, Brother Belmont, I don't thoroughly understand it; but as to my wife and children, they are very well; and I am glad to see you so.

Bel. Pray, Lady Mary, where is Miss Lawson?

L. Mary. In her chamber, sir; I have not seen her some time.

Bel. Ay, ay, I guessed it; some of ye have vexed her. I found her crying to-day, ready to break her heart. I suppose this is your doings, Lady Bridget?

L. Brid. Certainly my poor brother is seized with a delirium, to suppose it possible for me to transgress the laws of urbanity and hospitality in any instance.

L. Loui. Surely, sir, you must mistake.

Bel.

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Bel. No, madam, I do not mistake, I am in my senses; tho' so many teizing contradicting women are enough to put a man beside himself.

L. Mar. Pray, Brother Belmont, who may this same lady be? I don't remember any of your family of that name.

L. Brid. She is no way allied to us, sir, either by affinity or consanguinity.

Bel. You can't tell but she may.

L. Brid. You'll pardon me, brother, I do affirm she is not of our family.

Bel. Then I do affirm she is, for she lives in the house; and she may be nearer to you than you imagine.

L. Brid. His senses are quite gone.

Soutb. Faith, I think so; for he seems to me as if he had some thoughts of marrying.

L. Loui. No, no, my dear uncle is not quite so mad, sir.

Bel. Don't be too sure of that, my lady malapert; I hope I am old enough to take care of myself, without your advice or instruction, madam.

L. Brid. Don't oppose his insanity, irritation may augment it.

Bel. By Hercules Farnese, Lady Bridget, if you don't leave off your tricks, you'll put me in a devilish passion; and you had better be quiet, let me tell you.

Soutb. For my part, I don't understand all this; I know not who is mad or sober among ye; I think ye are all at a game of cross purposes, and I wish I was safe in the country again.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Please your ladyship, supper is served.

Bel. Is Miss Lawson in the parlour?

Serv. No, sir; she is not well, and desires to be excused.

Bel. Oh! now 'tis plain that you have made her sick somehow or other among ye—but I'll go comfort her as soon as supper is over.

SCENE

SCENE IV. *Another apartment.**Enter Emily, with a book in her hand.*

Emi. Reading's a charming exercise for minds at peace; books can even smooth affliction's furrow'd cheek, or change the source and channel of our tears, from selfish to humane; but when the mind is torn with doubts and fears, while mad contending passions labour in the breast, reason itself must fail to calm their discord; nor can the powers of eloquence or musick attune the soul to peace or harmony.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Emily, I thank you for the condescension you have shewn to my request, unknowing of the cause.

Emi. Your lordship's commands were rather an indulgence, than a force upon my wishes; I therefore claim no merit from obedience.

L. Bel. Your father is at present in this house, which will account to you for your confinement.

Emi. My father in the house! Will you not suffer me to see him, sir? O! let me fly to him, and give a loose to that soft sorrow that overpowers my heart.

L. Bel. No, Emily; for a little time you have promis'd to be rul'd; I think you want not sense or virtue to conduct yourself; but as I hope that by to-morrow we shall be able to clear up this dark scene which has perplex'd us, I wish you, for the present, to remain conceal'd: if my scheme shou'd fail, I then will give the reins into your hands, and suffer you to guide them.

Emi. It is an office I do not wish for—by nature and by providence design'd, our helpless sex's strength lies in dependance; and where we are so blest to meet with generous natures, our servitude is empire: to such a state I once aspir'd, but Somerville is gone; how lost my hopes of happiness!

L. Bel.

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L. Bel. Do not despair, Emily; you may possibly be nearer the completion of your wishes than you imagine; mean while, rest assur'd of every thing, in the power of true friendship, to alleviate your distress.

Emi. An honest heart, my lord, is always grateful; but when oppress'd with obligations, it may want the power of utterance; I cannot thank you, but I feel your kindness.

L. Bel. My dear Emily, I am sorry to leave you in this dejected mood; but I have two gentlemen to meet me upon business. I must therefore wish you a good night, and hope to-morrow's sun will dispel those clouds that hang at present on your fame and mind. [*Exit.*]

Emi. Let the bright radiance of unerring truth shine forth on Emily's every thought and action; and pity, not reproach, will then attend her. [*Exit.*]

SCENE V. *Lord Belmont's library.*

Enter Elder Freeman and a Servant.

Serv. I shall let my lord know you are here, sir. [*Exit.*]

E. Free. What an amiable man is Lord Belmont! I think no person so happily unites the man of business and the nobleman; nicely exact in all his dealings, yet generous as the most dissipated and extravagant; liberality and oeconomy go hand in hand with him, and mutually support each other.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Your servant, Mr. Freeman; your accounts and mine agree exactly; I have look'd them over, the vouchers are all right: but I fear I have trespass'd upon you, by desiring to see you at an hour which men of business generally do, and always ought to give up to amusement; but my being oblig'd to go into the country so immediately, will, I hope, plead my excuse.

E. Free. I consider my attendance on your lordship at any hour, as one of the rational pleasures of a man of

of business; as your conversation at once entertains and enlarges my mind.

L. Bel. You are extremely polite, Mr. Freeman, and I shall be glad of every opportunity to cultivate the friendship of a person, whose dealings, as a man, and manners, as a gentleman, I so much esteem. If you can spare a little time from business, I shall be very glad of the pleasure of your company in Worcester-shire.

E. Free. I am extremely oblig'd to your lordship; but my father now growing infirm, his health requires a recess from trouble and fatigue, and he passes most of the summer in the country; I therefore am confin'd.

L. Bel. You have a brother tho', whose attendance, I shou'd imagine, might set you free—he is bred to business, I think?

E. Free. Yes, my lord; but he is too fine a gentleman to follow it. The air of Lombard-street is too heavy for his constitution; he usually resides at this end of the town, has quitted business, and commenc'd fortune-hunter.

L. Bel. [*aside*]. As I suspected. I fear then, Mr. Freeman, he will make but a bad exchange; both a man's means and manners shou'd be suited to his situation, before he can possibly make a figure in it.

E. Free. Nothing can be truer than your lordship's remark; but reason has no power over dissipated minds, and experience alone can reclaim them: however, I will try once more to bring him back by argument.

L. Bel. I heartily wish you success, Mr. Freeman.

E. Free. And I your lordship a good night.

L. Bel. Your most obedient, sir. [*Exit Elder Freeman.* His brother certainly must be the man—How he cou'd possibly become acquainted with Louisa, I can't conceive; but public places put every person on a level; and at some of these he must have seen her. Tomorrow I will find this Freeman, and bring him to a severe account, both for Emily and Louisa. [*Exit.*]

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Discovers Lady Louisa at her toilet, her Maid waiting.

L. Loui. **G**IVE me that book, and then you may withdraw; I shall not want you again to-night. [*Exit Maid.*] What can keep Freeman? does he sleep when his good stars and mine are all awake! It seems as if the god of love himself had interfer'd, and dispos'd of the whole family in such a way as to prevent all interruption.—In short, there never was, nor will be such a charming opportunity.

Enter Younger Freeman.

O, Mr. Freeman! what cou'd tempt you to such a dangerous act of indiscretion? I shall be totally ruin'd if you shou'd be discovered.

Y. Free. Fear nothing, my angel, I will protect you from all danger; this happy night I shall become your guardian, and all my future life shall be devoted to your service.

L. Loui. This night, did you say, Mr. Freeman? How is it possible?

Y. Free. If you consent to bless me with your hand, we may escape this moment: I did not hear a creature in the house; they are all retired to rest; then do not lose this lucky crisis, but fly to love and happiness this moment.

L. Loui. It will be deem'd so rash a step, I fear my brother never will forgive me.—Had we not better ask his consent?

Y. Free. [*aside*] I must parry that stroke.—What are brothers, fathers, mothers, sisters, uncles, or aunts, to love? They might perhaps postpone our happiness for settlements, and such dull stuff; for I can assure your ladyship, there wou'd be no fear of a refusal—the family of Freeman—

L. Loui. I have no doubt but my friends wou'd be extremely pleased with your alliance, sir; and for that reason, wish we had consulted them.

Y. Free.

Y. Free. Why, so do I, since you seem now to desire it; but, oh! my charmer, think what I must suffer by the least delay? then let me gently press you to be mine; my chariot's at the garden-door.

L. Loui. I know not how to consent, or to deny.

Y. Free. Dear, lovely angel, do not torture me, nor tear my faithful heart, with doubts and fears; you must, you shall be mine.

L. Loui. What will the world say of me?

Y. Free. Say, that you had love, generosity, and spirit, to trust a man of honour: but why will you thus waste the precious minutes?

L. Loui. I find you can persuade me to any thing.

Y. Free. Generous creature! now let us fly.

L. Loui. Ha! there's my sister going to her chamber, which overlooks the garden; we must not stir, 'till she is in bed. Step into the next room, as it is possible she may come here. [*Exit Y. Freeman.*

Louisa sits at her toilet reading.

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. What are you reading, Louisa?

L. Loui. Pope's Homer, sister.

L. Mar. Then you have no mind to compose yourself to rest, I perceive; the loftiness of the subject, and elegance of the language, will be apt to rouse your attention, and keep you awake.

L. Loui. I am vastly sleepy, notwithstanding that.

L. Mar. Then I will not trespass on your repose, tho' I am unaccountably wakeful.—Shall I go with you to your chamber?

L. Loui. No, sister, I'll go with you to yours.

L. Mar. Come then, and if you have any good nature, you'll chat to me, while I undress. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Lord Belmont's library.*

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Poor Charles!—at last he is gone—what difficulty have I had in persuading him to seek for the
only

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only relief his present situation can admit of—rest.—
In some few hours, I hope his passions will be as much
rais'd with joy, as they are now depress'd by anxiety;
for, as I can have no doubt of Emily's conduct, or
his honour, they must yet be happy. [*A noise of
laughing.*] By that sound, I perceive that jolly three-
score are still at their bottle, perhaps they are in the
right; age shou'd enjoy, or rather catch each passing
moment of delight; youth shou'd husband time, and
spend it sparingly; the spirit, not the lees of life, is
worth preserving.

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

I hope you have met no accident to bring you back,
Sir Charles?

Sir Char. I scarce have breath to tell you.—Passing
again by your garden-door, I saw it stand open, and
at a little distance, a chariot: I asked the coachman
who he waited for? he said Mr. Freeman; he is
this moment, in your house, my lord, upon some
clandestine purpose.

L. Bel. You have amazed me; but let us act with
caution, nor trust my servants with my sisters honour
—to one of them he comes. O Charles, this is a
heavy trial.

Sir Char. It may not be so bad as you imagine; your
own maxim is, to hope the best.

L. Bel. We are all philosophers, when others suffer,
but tremblingly alive to our own feelings. I'll go,
this moment, and search every apartment. Do you
place yourself upon the center of the stair-case, and
lock the folding doors—if the villain shou'd fly from
me, you must meet him. But remember, Sir Charles,
he is accountable to me this night, to-morrow he
may answer you. [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III. *Lady Louisa's dressing-room.*

Enter Lady Louisa.

L. Loui. Was there ever any creature so teizing,
as Lady Mary? I really believe, if I had staid with
her,

her, she wou'd have continued talking 'till morning. It is amazing that she don't go to bed. I dare not let Mr. Freeman out, 'till I think she is asleep. Bless me, what noise is this?

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. O Louisa, my brother is this moment running from room to room, and searching every corner with his sword drawn, and a wildness in his countenance, not to be express'd: I am terrified to death.

L. Loui. I am undone! Freeman is in my chamber.

L. Mar. What shall we do? There may be murder if they meet.

L. Loui. I cannot speak, or think.

L. Mar. Let him fly down the back stairs.

L. Loui. It must be so, there is no other way.—Do you return to your chamber. *[Exeunt severally.]*

SCENE IV. *A passage, with a chamber-door shut.*

Enter Young Freeman.

Y. Free. The stair-case door is lock'd, there's no retreating. If I cou'd get into any of the rooms on the middle floor, I wou'd leap out of the window, and hazard my neck, rather than bear to be expos'd. I hear Lord Belmont's voice, I'll force this door, at all events. *[Pushes it open, and discovers Emily.]*

Ha! what has conjur'd up the only form, that at this moment cou'd encrease my terror?

Emi. Is it an apparition that I see! Defend me gracious heaven!

Y. Free. Dear madam, don't be alarmed; upon my knees I beg you will protect me; my life's at stake, and what is dearer still, a lady's honour.

Emi. Inhuman wretch! you have already robb'd me of all that was most precious, my lover and my fame; I have now nothing but my life to lose, and you may take it freely.

Y. Free. By heaven, madam, I never design'd you the least injury; and if you have the smallest grain

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of compassion, you will assist me to escape. I am absolutely ruin'd if you don't, and so is Lady Louisa. —Is there no way to get out?

Emi. Thou worse than murderer! do not profane a lady's name, that I am certain knows you not; but if you have the least compunction for all the sorrows you have brought on me, say why you haunt me thus?

Enter Lord Belmont, Lady Mary, and Lady Louisa.

L. Bel. Now, ladies, this affair must be explain'd. —Who are you, sir, that have thus broke into my house, at midnight, and taken refuge in this lady's chamber?

Y. Free. I'm at my last push; there is but one way. *[Aside.*

L. Bel. This moment speak, who are you?

Y. Free. A gentleman, my lord, but one, I must confess, who, tempted by strong passion, has infring'd that just respect, which is your lordship's due, by entering your house without your knowledge: but love, my lord.

L. Bel. Of whom? declare that, instantly.

L. Loui. *[aside]* Now I'm undone.

Y. Free. Your lordship will, I hope, excuse my mentioning the lady, as she is equally involv'd in this unlucky accident.

L. Bel. No trifling, sir; explain yourself this moment. *[Sir Charles appears.*

Sir Char. *[aside]* Sure 'tis a vision! no, it is my Emily.

Y. Free. Will nothing, sir, avail, to save the lady's honour?

L. Bel. Nothing shall save your life, sir, but a fair confession.

Y. Free. Why then, my lord, I must own, tho' very unwillingly, upon my honour, that I came hither by this lady's appointment. *[Points to Emily.*

Sir Char. Then all my fears are true, and I can hold no longer. *[comes forward]* Ungrateful woman.

Emi.

Emi. Good heaven! this is too much. [*Faints.*]

L. Louisa, and Lady Mary carry her off.

L. Loui. This is lucky, however. [*Aside.*]

L. Bel. I am struck dumb with wonder.

Y. Free. [*aside*] What the devil has brought him here?—Your lordship sees how much you have distressed the lady, by pressing her to own her passion; ladies are apt to be bashful, when there are strangers by.—Perhaps Sir Charles may not know me. [*Aside.*]

Sir Char. I beg, my lord, you will inform me.

L. Bel. Pray, Somerville, be calm; at a proper time, I shall satisfy all your enquiries about Emily.—
[*To Freeman.*] I have one question more to ask you, sir.

Y. Free. I am ready to answer with the same truth, my lord.—Egad, I shall come off with flying colours.
[*Aside.*]

L. Bel. Were not you in this house about seven this evening?

Y. Free. Why, as a man of honour, my lord, I can't possibly tell a lye; I was here about that time, but the lady was then afraid of being discovered, and desired me to come at this hour, when we concluded the family wou'd be at rest.

L. Bel. I am satisfied.

Y. Free. Why then, my lord, I beg leave to wish you, and the ladies, a very good night, and ask a thousand pardons for disturbing your lordship's repose.—
[*Going*] [*Lady Louisa appears.*]

L. Loui. [*aside*] He has brought me off triumphantly, but I must see the event.

Sir Char. Stay, sir, I have yet something to say to you.

Y. Free. Well, sir, pray what are your commands?

Sir Char. In that light you are to understand them, sir, for they shall be obey'd.

Y. Free. You'll please to be as brief as you can, sir, for it grows late.

Sir Char. That I have lov'd that wretched, hapless Emily, I need not now inform you; I have no doubt,

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but she has already gratified your vanity, by boasting of the sacrifice she made, however worthless she herself might think it.

Y. Free. Upon my honour, sir, the lady never mention'd your name to me in her life.

Sir Char. No interruption, nor evasion, sir, they can't avail. Fallen as she is at present, in my esteem, I will still, as far as she has left it possible, preserve her fame;—you must marry her immediately, sir.

L. Loui. Ha! what can this mean?

Y. Free. You are not in earnest, sir?

Sir Char. Quite determined.

Y. Free. You must excuse me, sir.—You do me honour.—But I have particular reasons—which, at present, I cannot so well explain.

Sir Char. [*draws*] Villain, defend yourself.

L. Bel. [*interposes*] Not in this house, Sir Charles; I must not suffer it.

Sir Char. No place shou'd be a sanctuary for such a monster.

Enter Mr. Belmont and Mr. Southerne.

Bel. Why, what the devil's the matter here! if you are for a bout of tilting, have with you, I'll be on the weaker side.

South. I say, what's the matter? I am a magistrate, and command the peace in the king's name.

Sir Char. [*To Free.*] We are prevented now; but if you do not chuse to join the name of coward to that of villain, I shall expect to hear from you to-morrow.

Y. Free. Pray, sir, hear me now.

South. Why, hey! what the devil is this? Here are the two fellows that ran away with my daughter; they shall give an account of her directly; who knows but they have murder'd her. I command you all to assist me to apprehend them.

Enter

Enter Emily, and falls at Mr. Southerne's feet.

Emi. Behold that wretched daughter at your feet, murder'd, indeed, in her lost peace and fame; but still alive to filial tenderness. O Somerville!

Bel. Why, Miss Lawson, what do you kneel to him for? get up, my pretty creature, and come to your own love; don't cry, don't cry.—Just as she stands now, she wou'd make a pretty model for a small Niobe.

South. No, don't cry, child, and I'll make one of them, at least, marry you, or I'll hang them both.

Bel. Neither of them shall have her; I'll marry her myself.

South. What, marry your niece, brother Belmont? Why don't you know Emily is my daughter?

Bel. None of your shams to me, I won't believe a word of it.

L. Bel. [To Freeman.] Have you had leisure, sir, to make your option, whether you will accept this lady for your wife, or vindicate your refusal with your sword?

Emi. What can you mean, my lord, why am I offer'd to that detested wretch? No power on earth shall force me to be his.

Sir Cbar. Well acted, madam, but the farce is done.

Y. Free. You hear, my lord, that the lady absolutely refuses, you would not be so cruel to compel her.

South. Ay, but I say I will compel her and you too; I'll have no more plague with her: this was the way she serv'd me about Winterbottom; I wish I had made her marry him.

Bel. Egad, I begin to think she is his daughter; and if that be the case, she shall get a husband.—Do you hear, you hatchet-face gentleman, that are very like my worst medal of Nero, if you don't marry my niece directly, you shall have a couple of ounces of

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lead in your stomach for breakfast, instead of your coffee to-morrow-morning; that is, if she says you promis'd her marriage; but if not, you are at liberty to go about your business.

Y. Free. I dare appeal, sir, to the lady's truth and honour; if she says I ever promis'd to marry her, I am ready to do so this moment.

Bel. Why that's fair enough.

South. I say right or wrong, nolens volens, he shall marry her.

Y. Free. Pray, madam, speak.

Emi. Though your inhuman artifices have undone me, I claim no promise from you, and call on heaven to witness, that 'till within this hour I never spoke to you, nor saw your face but once, 'till this unhappy night, in my whole life.

L. Bel. This is amazing!

Sir Char. By heaven she does not blush! Sure, madam, you forget that I stand here. Is it not enough that you are sunk in my esteem? But will you teach me to despise myself, for having ever lov'd a woman that can be capable of such mean, such unavailing fallhood?

Emi. Sir Charles, I pity more than blame you.

Sir Char. Insolent generosity! But I disclaim your pity; keep it, madam; for yourself, lest you should miss it elsewhere.

Bel. Pray, sir, don't scold my niece so; I don't see how she has deserv'd it from you.

Emi. O Somerville! is it possible you yet can doubt my innocence?

Sir Char. No, madam, I have no doubts; but beg you'll not profane a term that is your sex's brightest ornament—your innocence!

South. Come, gentlemen, all this talk signifies nothing; one or other of ye must marry my daughter, that's certain. You have acquitted this gentleman, child; now what have you to say to the other? I can safely

safely swear he promised to marry you, for he asked my consent.

Bel. If that be the case, I shall discourse him presently.

South. Come, don't be afraid to speak, child; I am in a very good humour now; and if you have a mind for that same knight, before George he shall marry you, or I'll hamper him at law, that I will.

Emi. You are so kind to promise, sir, you will confirm my option.

South. Ay, that I will, here's my hand for it.

Bel. And here's mine too, niece (tho' I am sorry to call you so) that no man alive shall use you ill while I am able to draw a trigger, if it was only for sake of that love I had for you, when I had a mind to be nearer related to you.

L. Bel. [To Sir Charles.] I cannot guess where this will end.

Sir Char. I am all impatience.

Emi. Tho' it must call a blush into a virgin's cheek, to own her love, before so many witnesses, yet as it is the only declaration of this kind, that I shall ever make, I will confess, that dearer than my life or fame, I love Sir Charles Somerville,

Sir Char. Confusion! Belmont, what can she intend?

Emi. Pray hear me out, the difficulty's past: I have avowed my love: but were that man, whom my heart owns its lord, to sue with all his former tenderness and passion, to obtain my hand, not worlds shou'd bribe me to bestow it.

Bel. [aside] That's very odd, tho'.

Emi. While in his heart there cou'd remain a single doubt of my truth or honour; and as my injur'd fame is now obscured, all I request, is, that you will permit me to retire to some distant part of the world, where my unhappy story is not known, and where my name may never bring disgrace upon my family;

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this, sir, is my sole request, and you have promised me to grant it.

Sir Char. O Belmont, she has torn my heart! but yet conviction cannot lye, my eyes, my ears, are witnesses of her falshood.

Bel. By Jupiter Ammon, you sha'n't go into any lonesome place, you shall live with me.

Sir Char. [*To Emily.*] Madam, the kind confession you have made, at least deserves my thanks, and I am truly sorry your conduct shou'd have contradicted it so far, as to make them the sole return I can with honour offer.

X. Free. [*aside*] I begin to feel unhappy about this girl; I cou'd almost recant—but what becomes of Louisa, then?

Emi. Had my resentment and resolves left it in your power to have shewn gratitude, in any other way, you never shou'd have known your obligation.

L. Bel. Still more and more mysterious. [*To Sir Charles.*] I know not what to think; but, let her faults be what they may, she carries her punishment in her own breast, and bears it nobly.

Sir Char. [*To L. Belmont.*] I am distress'd, beyond all measure; I cannot stand this scene. [*To Emily.*] Madam, my ardent wishes for your happiness, tho' with as little hopes of their success, as those I may bestow upon my own, shall still be yours—at present, I am sure, I rather increase, than lessen your distress, I therefore take my leave.

Emi. Adieu, for ever! [*Sir Charles bows, as going off.*]

Enter Lady Louisa, and Lady Mary.

L. Loui. Stay, sir! though I were sure to forfeit as much happiness as Emily deserves to possess, I cou'd not think of saving it at her expence.

Sir Char. [*To Lady Louisa.*] Speak, madam, quickly speak.

L. Loui. You must allow me time; I have a severe task to go through; and first must own myself unworthy

worthy of the most unbounded confidence, that a kind brother ever yet bestowed, or a rash girl abus'd.

Y. Free. [*aside*] Sure the devil won't tempt her to betray herself!

L. Bel. Speak without fear, Louisa, and be assur'd your motives for this generous confession already have excus'd you.

L. Loui. Shou'd even the loss of your esteem, my lord, attend the knowledge of my fault, I cannot bear that innocence shou'd suffer, and therefore will avow it. That gentleman [*points to Freeman*] came here this night to me.

Sir Char. Impossible!

Y. Free. [*aside*] I shall have my throat cut, that I see plainly.

L. Bel. By your appointment, sister; who did he come to in the afternoon?

Sir Char. Aye, my lord, what brought him hither, at that time? This is what ladies call a pious fraud of friendship.

L. Mary. Equally inclin'd to clear that lady's character, tho' not equally involved in the consequences, I own that I was acquainted with his visit at that time. Your lordship may remember my confusion, when you came up this evening.

Bel. Is the man bewitch'd? Did he court all my nieces, and won't marry any of them? I'll fight him with three case of pistols.

South. I am in a stound, Brother Belmont; I don't understand all this.

L. Bel. I do remember that you seem'd distress'd, but pray was it to you he came? [*To Lady Mary:*

L. Loui. No, my lord, it was to me. Speak, Mr. Freeman, you have often told me your family and fortune might claim me for your wife; are you ashamed of your attachment to me?

Y. Free. O, by no means, madam, tho' I may appear a little awkward at present.

L. Loui.

L. Loui. You see my brother is ready to forgive my folly, in carrying on a match clandestinely, that I might have own'd with honour; but indeed, my lord, it was my own romance, tho' I think Mr. Freeman has acquiesced rather too far.

Y. Free. Why, to be sure, ma'am, it was entirely to gratify your ladyship's humour, that I did not at first apply to my lord.

L. Loui. I have confess'd it, sir.

Y. Free. But since matters have taken this odd, ridiculous turn, I think it will be the best way to let my lawyer wait upon his lordship in the morning with my rent-roll; your ladyship shall have a carte blanche, I assure you, quite the same as if this affair had never happen'd. [*Aside.*] Egad, I wish I was fairly out of the house.

L. Bel. [*aside*] Insolent puppy!

Y. Free. As matters seem now to be upon a proper footing, I think it will not be amiss if I retire.

Sir Char. Hold, sir, did not I find you in this lady's closet [*points to Emily*] one night at Bath? You did not come to Lady Louisa there?

L. Loui. Ha! this I am quite a stranger to!

Y. Free. [*aside*] Egad, it is all out now. Why, sir, that this lady and I have met before is most certain. [*Points to Emily.*]

Emi. Good heaven! can you persist in such inhuman falshood?

Sir Char. O, 'tis quite clear, and this affair of Lady Louisa's is all pretence, my lord.

L. Loui. 'Tis not unlikely, I may be deceiv'd. [*To Emily.*] You shou'd have own'd your acquaintance with Mr. Freeman sooner, madam, and not suffer'd me to expose myself, by trying to save your character, which is already lost.

L. Mary. Do not insult her, sister; if she is innocent, it is a crime; if guilty, she has load enough to bear.

Enter

Enter a Servant.

Serv. My lord, the gentleman who was with you, upon business to night, desires to be admitted to you upon a very particular occasion.

L. Bel. Bid him walk in. *[Exit Servant.]*

Emi. Must my disgrace be made the common topic, and I the public gaze? Let me retire, my lord.

L. Bel. No, Emily, I intreat your stay for a few minutes, perhaps this gentleman may be of use.

Emi. I have no right, my lord, to hope relief from strangers, when love and friendship have abandon'd me. Yet I will stay, if you desire it; for grief like mine is patient.

Enter Elder Freeman.

Y. Free. *[aside]* Nay, then the devil does owe me a spite, and is resolv'd to pay it.

E. Free. By the confusion I read in my brother's face, my lord, I begin to think that my presence is unnecessary to his detection. But I beg the honour of speaking a word or two to your lordship apart.

[They retire to the side of the scene.]

L. Loui. His brother! 'Tis I that shall become the public topic now.

South. Hey day! Brother Belmont, what new adventure is going to open on us now?

Bel. *[To Lady Mary.]* I suppose this gentleman must be your humble servant, Lady Mary.

L. Bel. I am infinitely indebted to your friendship, sir. Sir Charles, this gentleman has confirmed what Louisa has before confessed. What is your opinion now?

Sir Char. I know not what to think, I am distracted; but still that Bath affair dwells on my mind, and weighs down all my hopes.

Y. Free. Why, then, sir, since Mr. John Freeman has thought proper to expose me before Lady Louisa, and that I have no farther hopes of recovering her
favour,

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favour, I will, without reserve, ease your mind and my own, by discovering the whole truth.

L. Bel. Do that, sir, and you may find a friend, where you had reason to expect an enemy.

South. Ay, do, pray tell us how that same business came about.

Emi. Pray, sir, do not keep me longer on the rack.

T. Free. I must have time to blush a little before Lady Louisa, madam, as I may possibly appear in her eyes a most unworthy wretch.

L. Loui. Nothing that you can say, sir, will alter my opinion of you, or remove the contempt I feel for myself; so pray proceed.

T. Free. Well, madam, [*to Emily*] the story is but short. You had a very pretty maid at Bath.

South. A bold, pert slut; Mrs. Southern never liked her.

T. Free. But I did, sir, nor was she in the least cruel; and by her appointment I was passing thro' your chamber into hers, at the very instant that gentleman [*points to Sir Charles*] and you came into the room. She pushed me into your closet, shut the door, and vanished. The rest you know too well.

Sir Char. How cou'd you, sir, be so inhuman, to let my Emily suffer? O Belmont, I dare not look upon her.

T. Free. Sir Charles, had your passion suffered you to have asked me then my errand, I shou'd have frankly own'd it; but while I had hopes of Lady Louisa, I could not, with any decency, have revealed these last particulars. And now, that I have done all in my power to set matters to rights, and atone my faults, I can only, in palliation of my behaviour, say, that it was not badness of heart, but dislike to a sedentary life, which tempted me to leave my sphere, and soar at higher objects. In which, I am now sensible, I have justly failed; and must encounter the deserved fate of those, whom vanity seduces from the situation of life provided for them.

E. Free.

E. Free. The daring to confess we have been wrong, is not only the highest act of bravery, but the best security for our future amendment; and thus reclaim'd, I am proud to embrace my brother.

South. But what is all this to my poor child's character, that had like to be ruined by you, and that impudent baggage?

Emi. O, sir, I am too happy to have my conduct cleared, both to the world and you! And yet, how gladly wou'd I now recall the fond confession, which distraction wrung from my weak, sinking heart, and now o'erwhelms me with blushes and confusion.

L. Loui. You have no cause to blush; it is for weakness, such as mine, to sink under my own reproach.

L. Bel. You are both too rigid to yourselves; but there is one who well deserves your pity, because he fears to ask it.

Sir Char. I do not, my lord, presume to ask for Emily's forgiveness, nor dare I form a hope that she shou'd grant it.

Emi. Sir Charles, I do not wish to triumph over your humility, but beg you will allow me to indulge my own generosity, by assuring you, that thro' this whole affair I never once condemned, but pitied your mistake.

Sir Char. My generous Emily!

Bel. Why, what is all this about? If you like my niece, why don't you come and take her, and her pity, and her pardon together, and I'll give you a good five thousand pounds into the bargain. Come, brother, give her hand to Sir Charles, and let's make an end of it.

South. With all my heart, brother, if they are both willing, for I promised my lord to give my consent.

L. Bel. Now, Emily, it rests on you alone, to shew that noble minds most easily forgive.

Emi. I have been only on the defensive, my lord, during this whole warfare; and such an enemy is generally

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nerally ready for terms of peace; therefore if you shou'd hold out the olive branch in my name, to your ally, you may suppose I shall accede to the treaty.

Sir Char. No words can speak my gratitude; my heart's too full for utterance. Transporting charmer! every way you have conquer'd, subdued me, by esteem, as well as love.

L. Bel. *From these events, the innocent may know,
That suffering is the lightest part of woe;
While our own conduct vindicates from blame,
Slander defeated, but augments our fame.*

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FINIS.

EPILOGUE.

Sent by a Person unknown.

Spoken by Miss WILFORD, in the character of
Lady LOUISA.

*I Had an Epilogue to speak to night,
But I'm so hurried, put in such a fright,
Deuce take me! — if I ha'nt forgot it quite.
To see my name in first night's play-bill printed,
A character quite new, in time quite stinted;
An Epilogue, besides, to get by heart,
'Tis most unmerciful, too long a part—
But they so coax'd and wheedled me to duty,
Lest I should fret—for fretting spoils one's beauty,
That, in obedience to the kind command,
A suppliant to your favour, here I stand:
And hope, instead of what had been prepar'd,
Some nonsense of my own, may now be heard.*

*Well! I have had a great escape, I own,
From being made the jest of all the town;
For from the court end I could claim no pity,
Nor had I more to hope for, from the city;
Such matches rarely answer either side,
For industry is suited ill with pride.*

*But, to divert your censure, let me shew
A folly more compleat, a city beau!
What contrast can there be so strong in nature,
As English plainness apeing petit-mâitre!
And yet poor I, by missing such a lover,
May wait, 'till all my dancing days are over!*

*Next, shift the scene—behold a virtuoso!
An old illiterate, feeble amorofo!
What weakness can the human heart discover,
More shameful, than a climacteric lover?
Men, who have turn'd the period of threescore,
Become mere virtuoso's—in amour.*

Nor

E P I L O G U E.

*Nor does Aunt Bridget merit better quarter,
Who, scorning to abide by female charter,
Invades a province, to our sex deny'd,
Aiming at knowledge with a pedant's pride;
When, after all our boast, we find, at length,
To know our weakness is our surest strength,
One path of science only, wise men say,
Is left for female learning—to obey.—* [Curtsyng.

*If characters like these your mirth excite,
And furnish some amusement for the night,
If nought offend the maxims of the stage,
Or shock the nicer morals of the age,
If only venial errors here you find,
Critics be dumb—ye men of candour, kind.*

F I N I S.

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